

The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.09



This week, there are a lot of wonderful pieces on the subject of "Achievements." It's a subject that we feel every day working at The Beat.

At every workshop we conduct, we recognize achievements that even those who are achieving may not recognize. A young man who's been locked up seven times before writes, "I want to change my thinking. I want to stop hurting my mother." That desire to change is itself a change, and change is an achievement that can only lead to other achievements, the kind that will turn a mother's tears to pride. In the same unit, a boy writes, "Until I got here, I never read a book. Now I've read five!" That's the kind of achievement that can only inspire him to read other books, to have his mind opened to new knowledge, to ideas he never knew existed, to a mind he never knew he possessed!

Another writer in a different county begins to question what he's been taught to believe, beginning with the lies his government has told (about war, about equal rights, about freedom) and ends with questions about what his homies have taught him, what the streets are teaching him. Questions are the beginning of wisdom, and merely asking them—even when the answers may not be so easily found—is an achievement which cannot be overestimated.

For some, just putting down three sentences together is a first-time accomplishment, an achievement of that first step in a long journey that must begin with a first step. In fact, when a youngster tells us, "I can't write," but picks up the pencil anyway and tries, we marvel at that achievement. (Just as when someone tells us, "I don't like to write," and sits through the workshop without writing a word, we know he will achieve little, until he is willing to do what he does not like doing, whether it's writing or listening to his mother.)

Others with special abilities that often make us wide-eyed with envy write awe-inspiring pieces, near masterpieces of thought and self-expression that are accomplishments beyond measure. Today, we read a piece, a long and extremely thoughtful piece, by a future leader who wrote, "... we have to push, push harder, and understand that we are worth it." Oh, yes, indeed we (all of us) are worth it. The inspiration that led to writing his Piece Of the Week inspires us, which, like the ripples in a pond, move out from the center, inspiring others. How can you measure an achievement of such significance?

Some achievements push you forward to new ones: getting your GED while locked up makes you see what you are capable of, and pushes you toward fulfilling that capacity. Writing a poem that you read aloud—and after reading, people applaud you! What a feeling of accomplishment that is!

Some, discouraged by being locked in a box away from those they love, rely on past achievements to get them through the day—remembering how they performed on the football field, for example, and how good it felt to achieve.

Some achievements seem small, but how do we know what is small and what is large? Just trying is an achievement, even if we fail to achieve our goal. Failing to achieve what we try is not failure at all, but failure to try is a guaranteed failure to achieve, and that is the biggest failure of all.

We cannot imagine how we might deal with some of the incredible adversity many of you have been dealing with all your lives. And, in truth, many of you have given up, have made the decision that nothing will ever change, so you've stopped trying. But the rest of you—especially you who fall, who fail, but who get up again and again and face another day with determination to stand, to walk, to go forward—you continue to achieve, and achieve again. And even in your "failures," you inspire others to try.

When we look around the office, we see so many young people who have had to overcome so many obstacles in their lives, and have so many more partially blocking the path in front of them. Yet, they manage to get up, find a way to get to the office, do the daily work that allows us to put this magazine together, and then go home to families or to significant others or to no one. They make very little money, but they work every day. Why? We believe it's because the feeling they ACHIEVE each time day they succeed has a value that's greater than money.

Outside the halls, there are other achievements, including many which go unnoticed. Last week, for example, a small item appeared in the newspaper about a math teacher at California State University East Bay (Hayward). At that level, professors are required to sign an oath of loyalty to the country, promising to "defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and

domestic." But she is a Quaker, a religion that does not believe in the use of violence. So, she wrote the word, "nonviolently" in front of the word, "defend." The University told her to sign the oath as written (they were not concerned with the truth of her signature; they only wanted her to sign), and they warned that they would fire her if she didn't sign. Quietly, she refused. She stood by her principles... and lost her job. Like Jesus, Gandhi, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., she was willing to accept the consequences of her actions, standing up for what she believed. She lost her job, but in so doing, her achievement was huge; the university's failure to achieve was equally huge.

Perhaps that is the biggest achievement of all—to take personal responsibility for our actions, and to accept the consequences. When we read (as we do each week) that "the system is playing me," we know that the writer has not yet taken responsibility. Or, when a boy writes that he is about to become a father, but his focus is getting back to the "spot" with his "boys," we know he's still waiting for the achievement of adulthood—which is just another word for taking responsibility. When a girl says she wants to be a role model for her young siblings, but she's "down for her block," we know she is not ready for that wonderful achievement of guiding her younger brothers and sisters toward a better path—and that they are likely to follow her "role model" right into the hall as they grow.

A man we know once told his son: "Whatever you want to do in life, consider the consequences. If you are willing to accept them, then go after what you want. If you are not willing to accept them, you are not ready to go after what you want." To live by that principle—that would be an achievement!

Every time you sit down in a Beat workshop and put pencil to paper, you are achieving something. And your achievements put together become our achievement, which is The Beat Within itself. Every single week, we ask you to dig down and expose yourselves to us and to all who read what you write, and each week, enough of you dig deep enough that we discover gold. Week after week, year after year. Gold! What an incredible achievement!

This week's topics were presented in our workshops as follows... "Achievements"—The dictionary defines "achieve" as to succeed in doing or gaining something, usually with effort. Knowing this, having to achieve something that no one thought you could do is an awesome feeling, or taking on and succeeding on a project that calls for a lot of hard work and time is very satisfying. Most of us, already, have been achieving plenty in our young lives, dating back to the time you learn how to tie your shoes and dress your self, to learning how to read, to learning how to play board games, to graduating from middle school, to making the varsity football team, etc. This week we want to read your list of achievements. This week we want to hear the most difficult achievement you have had to encounter. We also want to read about what you are most proud of that you achieved. Lastly, tell us what you plan to achieve in your life and how you are going to do it!

Our second timely topic, "Voting For President"—Some day a number of you will get the chance to vote in local and national elections. Definitely, one time every single one of you were eligible to vote, before you found yourself in juvenile hall. In the end we hope at least half of you will use your right to vote when the opportunity is there. OK, this week we want to read your thoughts on the current crop of presidential hopefuls—Barack Obama, Hilary Clinton, John McCain, Mitt Romney—and why you would vote for him, her or none, because... We want to know what the appeal is and what you hope this powerful politician will do for our country if he/she gets elected into office. We want to know what you know if anything about this presidential hopeful that you like. What have you heard? Tell us what you know and why you think he or she will be the best president in the United States.

Last but not least, "If Everyone Could Vote..."—It's election time, so we were wondering if the country would be different if everyone could vote? Do you think the laws would be different if convicted felons could vote? How so? How do you think non-U.S. citizens being able to vote would affect the rights of immigrants? All in all, what would be the same and what would be different if everyone living in the United States of America could vote?

Thanks for paying attention to the editorial note, ed. note readers, this issue goes out to you readers, and to those yet to recognize the ability to achieve great things, big or small.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Valentines VS Black History Month

Dear Beat, as you know this is the month of love but not only that, it is Black History Month. But the sad part is that most youth get blindsided by cupid and Valentine's Day and we tend to forget the importance of the month and the history behind it.

Well, it's only right that I give you some food for knowledge: Black History Month originated from Negro History Week which was made possible by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. He chose the second week because it marks the birthdays of Fredrick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, two influential men in Afro-American history. But those are not the only things to be proud of.

The month also represents these following events: the nation association for the advance of colored people or NAACP was founded. WEB Dubois was born. Malcom X was shot to death by three Black Muslim men. And the fifteenth amendment was passed granting Blacks the right to vote. These are just some of the many achievements and events that have taken place in America's history. But don't stop learning here. Check out books, go online, don't stop learning, all you got is time.

-Sexy, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for writing this piece. Even when February is over, we hope you keep educating Beat Readers about the history of our communities! By the way, did you know that March is Women's History Month!

If Convicts Could Make A Difference

What's up with The Beat? Chea, it's your boy Lil' Rob holding it down here.

What if convicts could vote? If convicts could vote, we probably would have the right person in office. I don't know, but I would rather have a Democratic candidate in office, because they help the people that is poor and they are going to stop the unnecessary war on oil. The Republicans don't help the poor; they help the rich get richer and poor get poorer. Also, Republicans are major supporters on the war on oil.

Well, Beat, that's all I got to say.

-Lil' Rob, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thanks for taking this topic seriously and giving us a serious response. When you are 18, you will be eligible to register and to vote. Will you take advantage of that opportunity? We sure hope so, because we think you have what it takes to be an informed voter who could make a difference in our leadership.

My Greatest Achievements

My greatest achievements are one, being strong willed and never giving into those who try to crush me both physically and emotionally. I'm still me and I'm still here, I will not break though I don't deserve to be here. I stand proud and strong and laugh at the futile attempts to keep me down.

My other one is truly my greatest accomplishment. I have raised my youngest brother to be like me and to one day be stronger. He will live by the rules. I lived mine.

Screw the gangs, screw drugs. He will be a man with honor, integrity, wisdom, courage, respect and strength. If I can have one wish it would be to see him, the brother I raised like a son, become the man I know he will be.

-Wolverine, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Those are very strong and powerful words and nice words to say about your brother. We're glad to hear you really look out for your brother and guide him in the right direction. But right now you need to get out of here, and go back to the mission that you were on. Stop getting in trouble so you can continue to raise your brother. He needs all the positive influences that you can offer in his life.

Achievements

All throughout life I have been set up for failure. I have believed that being set up for failure and being destined for failure were the same thing.

I believed that I was destined to be a drug dealer and a gang banger. The fact, though, is that I was set up for the failures I have endured. Being in here has opened my eyes to see differently. I have achieved very much in my lifetime.

Many of my achievements have been bad but I have also made achievements that have been good. I've been led down the wrong path and I followed on that path for 8 years.

One of my achievements that I will always remember happened when I was a youngster. When I was in 5th grade I woke up one morning to see two buildings hit by airplanes on the TV. It was 9-11-01. That day at school my teacher was crying and I was confused. I wrote a poem about 9/11 called "Tomorrow Is Another Day." This was my greatest achievement as a kid.

In the future I want my achievements to be these... 1. Finish college, major in English and journalism. 2. Attend the military. 3. Write to the newspaper of my program. 4. Write a book.

-Adrian, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're very glad to hear you talk like that Adrian! You are a smart young man with a lot of talent and potential. You need to let go of all that negative thinking that you once had. It's will not get you anywhere in life. Gangbanging is only going to lead you to penitentiaries and visits to funeral homes. You can do anything that you put your mind to. Don't let anything stop you from achieving your goals.

Harsh Truth

I was starting to smoke like crazy
A pattern that continued every Tuesday
It was something about the smell
it was hotter then hell
It made me go on a hunt just to get an extra blunt
People never saw what I've seen
It made me say "ef" the law, didn't give a "ef", now I'm in
juvenile hall
The courtroom thought it was just a game
Now I'm sitting here in pain
all because of my choices
Should have never listened to all them voices
Now a little something about the D-home
Can't even use the phone, can't even shower alone
You start to miss the simple things
I wish God could give me some wings
so I can fly out of here
And let every body hear
that this is a bad place to end up
All you hear is shut up
now I tell you all from my heart
Don't let this place be the start
because once you're in
You'll never win
Let me tell you about this place
Everybody judges you because of your case
They tell you when to go to sleep
It's like you don't even own your own feet
Don't have a choice on what you eat
They tell you where to have a seat.

-King Henry, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Your words are harsh but true and to the point. The harsh reality of life is that you have two choices in life, and most of us know the difference between right from wrong. Now live your life and change your old ways so you can follow the right path in life.

For You Who Have Lost Hope

People stare at me, in their eyes a murderer.

Looking at myself, I see a teenager.

Every day I wish when will this end.

When people realize that I'm a friend?

All the people who have lost hope,

Ask yourself who you love the most.

Your achievement is stayin' alive another day.

So a mother's love can shine in every way.

Reach out your hand if love is not shown

'Cause I'll be the one who'll raise the tone.

-Bruce, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We see more than a teen when we look at you/We see an open heart, a fine brain and courage, too/While you say it with a whisper, and not with a shout/The most precious gift you offer is the hand that reaches out!

Make Me Better

What I'm trying to achieve is still in process. My life is getting better, little by little. I started last year never going to school. I missed two years of school, was doing drugs. And when I say drugs, not only bud.

I was a bad brother to my siblings, or at least in their eyes, but I was just too blind to see that. Never listened to my mother who was just trying to look out for me. Not coming home for months at times, and ignoring my mother's calls.

Now I've improved a lot, and people tell me that a lot! I stay home more, always there for my siblings, and they love it. I'm closer to my mom than ever, and it's a good feeling.

Anyway, but I'm still not done. My goal is to stay in school as long as it takes to graduate and go on in life. Anyways, school, I've been going daily. But this isn't over. The year is full of surprises. 'Til next time.

-Lefty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hardly know how to express our appreciation and encouragement for everything you've written here. So many of our writers see the hole they've dug for themselves and use that as an excuse to give up. You, on the other hand, saw the hole you've dug for yourself and decided to dig yourself out. "Little by little" is exactly the way to do it, and we know you bring a big smile to your mom's face and the faces of your siblings who most definitely need you. You're so right, the year is full of surprises, and you're one of the nicest we've had. Thank you!

We Are Controlled By The Government!

What's up Beat? I've decided that when I go to the next institution I'm going to write a book. Well more like an essay. Kind of like Henry David Thoreau.

I'll be writing about societies of the world and our place in the world. In my opinion, I think our county is brainwashed by the government, and we are caught with so many delusions. The government also gets caught lying to us. Imagine how many lies they have gotten away with! We are being controlled by them and we must educate ourselves to realize what is going on.

I don't know much about all this, but I believe I'm on the right path. So this essay is so I can reflect on my knowledge and understand and learn from it.

Well, Beat, I'll see you next week. Peace!

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are so impressed by what you've written, VT! Questioning what we are told (by the government, by our homies, even by our families) is the beginning of real wisdom based on real knowledge — and as rare as diamonds. You can do so much to educate yourself by reading, especially when you understand that it is in the interest of those in power to stay in power — even if that means telling us lies that we like to hear. We read in every issue of The Beat how the older homies school the younger homies to believe the same lies they have lived (and died) for, who accept what they're "taught" without question. It's the same for those running the country, the biggest homies of all. Question everything you hear! And then teach us what you learn. We will be first in line to read the powerful essay (or book) we know you are capable of writing!

Presidents

"Osama bin Laden is more popular in Saudi Arabia today than George W. Bush is in America."

"The President knew the attacks on Pearl Harbor were coming; he did nothing. He had to sacrifice American blood so he would be justified in testing out the Atom Bomb."

"Our President George Bush knew of the terrorist plot to bring down the two towers; yet, out of greed for oil money, he did nothing."

"Our nation feeds us lies so the rich (those few at the top) not only maintain their positions, but get even richer."

"Iraq houses weapons of mass destruction," (Bush).

"We've found the weapons of mass destruction, and for those who say there were none, we've found them." (Bush, later).

"Still haven't found those weapons of mass destruction yet!" (Bush, even later).

"It's hard to tell, sometimes, who I'm running against!" (Obama on how Bill is helping Hillary's campaign).

I no longer trust the government system. All of these things I have heard, and more. What is worse is that I am so blind, that I don't even suspect such shady business. Of course, I don't know if what I've heard others say is true, either. The idea, though, that the President is the only a figurehead, a dancing puppet — or someone who would think nothing of killing so many innocent people — is shocking. But as they say, love of money is the root of all evil.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From Thee Beat: And maybe we could add "love of power" to that evil root! One thing we can say for sure, however, is that you are far from blind! Your eyes are wide open, and your brain is working the way we wish all our fellow Americans' brains worked. Critical thinking — the ability (and desire) to analyze what you're taught and what you hear and see instead of merely accepting it — is a rare commodity in our experience, and that lack of it has tragic consequences for the world and ourselves. Your questioning mind (even questioning whether these things you've heard is true or not) gives us hope that not all are blind, not all are deaf, and that maybe there are still some potential leaders in your generation that can save us from ourselves. Whatever missteps led you here only prove to us the strength of those powerfully beautiful words in the spiritual, "Amazing Grace": "I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see."

Dreaming To Be A Professional Dancer

I have many achievements, but my main achievement is getting into SPSOTA (San Francisco School Of The Arts). It was and is a long and stressful process, because after your audition, it takes forever to get your results. The reason why I'm proud of that is because it is my dream to become a professional dancer. I do ballet, modern, tap, jazz, hip-hop, and I took Flamenco once. I have done Afro-Cuban and Stomp dance.

Going to that school is one of the best decisions I made in my life that would help me in the future. Like (gospel singer) Yolanda Adams said, "Keep the dream alive. Don't let it down. There's something deep inside. Keep your dream inside your heart." That's a very good way to encourage someone, I believe.

I have court tomorrow, and if I get released, I'll talk to my dance director to see if I'm kicked out of the department. I hope not.

-Egypt, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have accomplished so much, and have such important dreams, what was so important to you that you risked losing all that while also losing your freedom? We hope you are no longer here when this comes out, but even more, we hope that you treasure the gifts you have enough to keep your freedom, work hard, and achieve all your dreams. (We would love to see you dance. Is that possible?)

A Changed Life

My achievements is to get out of juvenile hall and not try to come back here ever again:
 Finishing high school and not messing up again.
 Then getting a job that pays good money and that can be stable for me.
 Going to college for four years.
 Being a mechanical engineer when I grow up.
 Staying in school, not cutting, keeping my grades up.
 Learning how to drive and pass my written test before the summer or during the summer.
 Being with my family when I get out of juvenile hall and don't do anything stupid that leads me back to jail.
 Trying to get my GPA up to 2.0 and up.
 Trying not to stress and over-react every day.
 Hoping my life turn out to be an success when I get out.
 Doing my best making my family happy and not let them stress about me.
 Being at home and school when I'm out of juvenile hall.
 Being with my family and friends when I get out of juvenile hall.

-Andy, San Francisco

From The Beat: What you are describing — getting out of here, never coming back, going to college, making your family proud of you — are not achievements, they are goals. But don't get us wrong, they are all wonderful goals, all extremely important, and we know you can achieve them if you take them one step at a time. We hardly ever get to read a piece as positive and forward-looking at this, a piece that already reflects a complete change of attitude, which is the most important ingredient to achieving these fine goals you've set for yourself. We laid this out like a poem because we want you (and your readers) to see just how many goals you've set for yourself, and just how mature and responsible you sound to us when we read them. Even if you fall from time to time in your attempt, just get back up, dust yourself off, and keep on moving forward. This is an inspiration. Thank you for it.

Are We Ready?

This year we have a chance to elect either a woman or a black man for president. Just the fact that we're talking about that and that there's a possibility to do it is amazing. But the huge question is whether this country is ready for it.

Yeah, this country has come forward but are we there yet? I've talked about this with many of educated people and we think that there's a small chance that Barack Obama will be elected, and that if he is, he will be assassinated sometime during his years as president. There is still some deep-rooted racism in the south and some in the liberal states. Some of those people who claim to be separatist and believe they are not part of this country, will come out to vote and make sure that a black man would not be president.

The fact there is consideration for that's an improvement and I think it may happen during my lifetime. I don't see it happening in 2008. Having said that, I haven't given up hope and did vote for him in the primaries.

Another thought: How are we ready for a black men as president, when there is still a need for Black History Month? If we still need a month to acknowledge the accomplishments of Black people — and not be able to do it all year — then obviously we haven't moved along far enough. But what do I know? I'm hoping to be proved wrong.

-The Rantings of a Lunatic, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well Mister Lunatic, a lot of older black people are so worried about Obama being shot or turned into an "Uncle Tom" that they are voting for Hillary instead. The most frustrating thing is how much anger and sexism is aimed at Hillary Clinton. It's like a big popularity contest — and is it really going to change the system at the end of the day?

My Mind

I've gone through days and days of pain and constant drain.
 Words don't seem to reach me.
 All alone, we know no one can see me hidden behind a smile,
 thoughts that go for miles, can't seem to get away from confusion and pain.
 Why can't I just be happy and find peace inside my mind?
 Because I don't have the time to deal with all these things inside my mind
 that keep on killing my happiness inside.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Oh Sapita, we miss you and your introspective poems. Hope you are doing well at County. Write to us!

Momma

Momma I'm sorry for the shhh I did, they shhh I done.
 I wish my brother and I could've been something better.
 But instead of thinking back on our life, we run the streets,
 And instead of thinking of you, man I thought of me.
 I should have been in school trying to get that education,
 And man you was good to your boys, man you kept patience,
 I ain't trying to say our whole life was filled with tragedies
 Momma, you took me and my bra' in when we was in need,
 The shhh I'm doing now got nothing to do with how you raise me,
 'Cause I'm tired hearing people say you raise me crazy,
 You put your life on hold for me and my brother I love you
 I'm in a cell but that don't mean I ain't thinking of you.
 Mama I appreciate the things you did as we was kids,
 Mama I appreciate the shhh you done when we was young,
 Mama I appreciate.
 I appreciate everything that you did
 'Cause if it wasn't for you, I don't know what I would do,
 Mama I'm sorry for the shhh I put you through,
 I know stress on yo' hand, 'cause stress on my hand,
 If I could have made it all right,
 Then that's what I would've did,
 I wish we had a better life, but it is what it is.
 I'm on the verge of changing
 so that's what I'm gone do,
 I'm doing it for my family for my bra, my sis, me for you.
 Mama I hope you know the words I'm saying is truthful.
 Mama I know you sick and tired of this shhh
 That me and my brothers putting you through this bad weather
 This shhh ain't go last forever,
 And if you take my word for it, it go get better,
 I love my momma she a strong Black African American
 that been through the struggle, and pulled out with a muscle,
 To say I would want a different ma it would be a lie,
 I love my ma.... love her a lot.

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: The beautiful thing to remember about your love for your Mother is that you don't need to sacrifice anything to give her what she needs from you. She wants you to be strong, free, to escape from the rough streets you've been caught up in. She wants you to live up to all the promise of your mind and heart — in other words, she wants for you the things that deep down, YOU want for you. So keep these promises — for her, for your brother, and mostly for you.

Latino Family

What's up with it, Beat? How's everything? Well, I'm just saying what's up and want to tell all my Latinos out there to stay strong and think about the bigger picture.

We've been struggling for so long and we're hurting each other. Remember who you are. Mexicanos are Spanish, but don't forget your Indian blood either – puro Azteca. We were stripped for our land and used. It's time we come up together as one because we're being set up to kill each other.

The government could care less about how many of us go to prison and die. We need to stop and think about the bigger picture instead of hurting our own blood. That's what they want. They want us to fall apart. Don't forget who you are. Don't let no one discourage you – we're kings and queens of this land.

Pudo Latino! Until next time – this Mexican Puerto Rican Latino is gone.

-Rican, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a beautiful piece that sends an important message to your community. It takes a sharp analysis and a knowledge of history to look past the violence on the streets today. Thank you for sending a positive message through the pages of The Beat.

Dreams For Baby Girl

I got to pour my heart out...

Damn I'm going deep

Cause I don't want my baby girl to grow up in the streets

I wanna make sure she go to school and graduate

Ain't nothing hard about it

I could have went that way.

I want her to get a job and wait to have her own kids
Live the life that she want and please wait for that shhh.

I got dreams... no! Goals for her to accomplish

Be a business woman, successful and leave the street
shhh alone

And let somebody else play that game.

On the real. If she live bad my name gonna die in vain

'Cause I want her to live right

I got big dreams for her world

'Cause I got nothing but love for my precious baby girl

-Shady Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: This is the real you/the highest self, the good that's true/ but if you want her to live good/show her how the way you should/you gave her your name but you have to be there to teach her/you're her father, her first love, the first who can reach her/so it's time to give your old ways a push and a shove/be true to your words – show "nothing but love."

If I Could Vote

Would I vote for a woman or a black man?

Regardless I would vote for change,

I would vote for a better future.

President Hilary Clinton,

President Barack Obama.

Wow, sounds better than Bush, d

amn anything is better than Bush.

How could we vote him in for 8 years?

Well, it wasn't I who voted him in.

It was foolish Americans who put that crook in office.

We need a new crook, a crook that looks out for the
people,

my people, me, you, all of us.

Not just the rich. If I could vote.....

-Someday, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We totally agree with you. We wanna see some change too. We need a president that's gonna look out for all the people that really struggle out here in corporate America. Good insight. Do you think young people should be allowed to vote?

I Am

My name is Taco!

Me, being in Juvenile Hall system, all they look at is your files. And my criminal record is nothing like the person I am. It hurts that I'm being treated, or looked at a certain way because of a crime.

I find myself to be a really nice, caring, outspoken person. I'm the type of person that brings everyone together as one. People rarely fight or argue around me because of my personality.

People say I'm goofy and my laugh is contagious! I'm never sad or depressed because of this situation I'm in, nor because of this place. I think me being a strong person helps the other girls, because I can talk to them and encourage them to stay strong. But on the outs I was a party person.

I enjoyed going to school interacting with my teachers and staff at my school. I'm not used to being around this many girls, or girls my age at that, I'm used to being around adults, and being free to do as I please.

I know God wouldn't put me in any living situation that I couldn't get out of! So I'm gone thug it out until the day I'm set free!

-Taco, Alameda

From The Beat: Taco, thank you for another thoughtful piece. We appreciate how honest and upfront you are, and we hope you keep writing. You say the girls in the unit turn to you for support— so who do you turn to when you need that support? And who can you turn to when you get back out in the world? You have so much potential, we want to make sure that your potential is being nurtured by caring adults!

A New Life Achievement

My biggest achievement is me not gang banging and starting a new life. I don't drink and smoke anymore, or cut classes. I stopped being a follower and now I'm a leader.

I'm a new me. Now, I'm going to start going to school when I get out of this juvenile hall.

I turned my whole life around. I'm so proud of myself 'cause my family is gonna see what I turned myself into. I'm finishing this house arrest and program then am going to get off probation because I hate being told what to do and when to do it. I wanna do things on my own now. I'd rather have my parents and family happy for me knowing I succeeded in life, and know their son could (and will) do it.

-Mature Son, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Congratulations. Making these changes in your life and your outlook are the biggest achievements and will be more significant than any diploma or good job that you get later in life.

Presidential Politics

It's sad when you think about politics there's so much drama

Man, our last president was dumba than a llama

He sendin' our men to die over a bum named Osama

If we could we'd all stop Bush fasta than a comma

And you know this, you can't deny it

Everybody preachin' peace but we need to apply it

Who are we to try to save other countries

When it comes to America our people goin' hungry

Man all this hatred and criticism is killin' me

I don't even think the world's ready for Obama or Hillary

-D-Mani, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Powerful and insightful words D-Mani. As we prepare this week's edition, the Democratic race for a nomination could very well conclude, with Senator Obama the current favorite. If you fear that the world is not ready for him, what advice would you give Barack to better his odds? Keep up the deep thoughts this week.

Young Life

Messing up as a young kid
got me thinking of my mistakes.
I could have stopped
but I didn't have the brakes.
As I was on the streets
trying to get all I could take,
damn the past didn't last.
I worry my little brother
is leaving too fast.
I got some pain inside of me
trying to take the best of me –
listen to the things I been speaking,
hoping to get a honor
but that hope has been broken,
in my dream
I have vision of people killing me
but I stay strong 'cause ain't no one dropping me.
I miss my kid.
I know I made mistakes in life,
but we are humans,
no one's perfect.
I'm trying to get to know how to be a father,
but in this life not even my dad bothers.
Good thing I had, and still have, my mom,
show the best,
to respect the rest,
no one is invisible,
you don't get saved –
not even having a bulletproof vest,
but everyone is out there trying to be hard –
trying to test.
You only live once,
so make the best.
I don't know why I keep crazy shhh up in my dome,
its only hard for me,
should I let it take all of me,
'till next time I'll let you know,
to all in here
keep your head up and
don't let nobody bring you down,
stand tall but don't let yourself fall.
Alrato – love to my lady – she's my baby,
got me hypnotized thinking of your lovely tits,
you got me searching for lips. Love you.

-Payasito, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this is a great stream-of-consciousness type poem that really flows all over your mind. But you certainly have a way with rhymes and flows. Thanks for sharing.

A Painfully True Story

There was once a little girl
who was lost in this crazy world.
She meets this drug named meth,
it took the best from her.
She tried to find a cure,
now you define the rest.
She was looking through a blind eye,
she continued to do meth.
The meth took over,
times passing, clocks ticking;
I'm burning underground.
Too stubborn to listen to parents,
bad choices turned into meth.
Based on a true life story.

- Alyssa, Land Of Enchantment

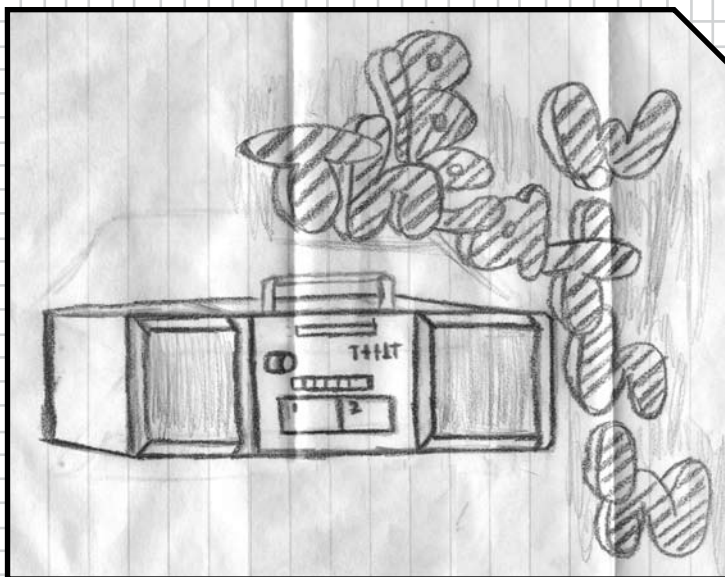
From The Beat: Alyssa started to take us to the edge, and then you just stopped. Let us know more, about how and if you quit doing meth, and what it has done to you giving us details. We at The Beat want to hear more about your crazy world.

God Talk To Me

God please talk to me I know you see how it is
This is Oakland where kids killing kids
Why did you take Rob away
He only a little baby he didn't even get time to play
God please talk to me cause I'm in a hard situation
Don't know where I'm gone go or how much time I'm
facing
God why did you have to take Dab away
He was only eighteen that ain't fair to me
And God why did you let that happen to Jesse and Kev
Damn my big brother you let him take one to the head
And God why did you let Tony drown
It took a couple days for him to be found
God why you let Tamu put that needle in her arm
God talk to me.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: God works in mysterious ways. But where ever there's good there's also evil. Kids are killing kids but you can't go and put all the responsibility on God. You need to have the community talk to each other. Why is your own people killing each other? For what, for some Jordans and scraper on twenty-twos? Drugs? Go ask them. Solid piece!



No Voting Here

Shhh, I'm hella mad Beat ,because basically coming in here has stopped me from voting. I have turned 18 on January 31, 2008 the election year, shhh! I've been waiting for years so I could vote Bush out of office. Now I'm hella mad because I'm in here and can't vote.

If I could vote it would either be Obama or Clinton. Basically, because Obama is about helping the troops and Clinton because it would be good to see a woman in office.

The only reason I wouldn't vote for Clinton is she wants to stop producing videogames that are violent, what the hell? Videogames don't tell people to buy guns, why not try to get guns off the streets! Then take videogames competition out of the US. Basically, I would have to vote, but look where I'm at. Oh well four more years to go. Hopefully I will be able to vote then.

-Btb, Alameda

From The Beat: Well you messed up by getting in trouble. But at least Bush can't be reelected again because his term is up. All you can do now is sit back and watch the election. But you can make sure that you're not getting into any more trouble. Remember, once you're a convicted felon when you're an adult you can't vote. Four more years to go. So make sure you're gonna be able to vote. Stay free and become productive!

If Everyone Could Vote

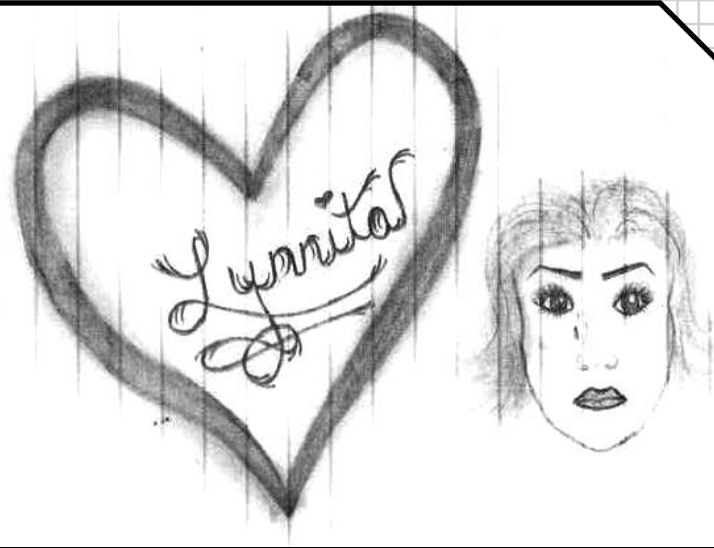
I think that the world be a much better place if felons could vote, due to the fact that they are human also. They just made a mistake – that does not mean they are not human. There are a lot of laws that would not take place if they were able to vote, but since there is a black man running for president, maybe it would inspire a lot of minorities to vote. I know I'm going to vote for Barack Obama.

I'm just so proud that finally the black culture has stepped up tremendously. Before in the white world, we didn't exist, but due to MLK, jr. and Rosa Parks – we now have a voice for me, being black, Puerto Rican and Cuban. I still feed like the black community is uprising and needs too.

If all the people that died for the black race were still alive and realized that they died for voting and standing up for their rights, and now there's a black man running for president, they would be more than happy. They would feel like all that they have tried to make right for the future and their kids has finally come.

-Sha T, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It is a really powerful legacy that Barack Obama is fulfilling, and that is a wonderful reason to vote for him. It sounds like you truly believe in the power of voting – you should spread that energy to all your friends.



Death Incarcerated

I am but a pawn in your game.

I sit in my cell bored out of my mind.

I will not rebel. The darkness reaches the peak. I will not escape.

Again I'm in a haze. I will not deceive.

Should I explode and burst into flames or should I lay still like I'm supposed to?

I will not push you away. It's a question that runs through my mind every second of every minute of every hour of everyday of every month of every year of my life.

I am sorrow. I lay still. I am unwanted.

What is to become of my life. I am betrayed.

As I am pulled into the shadows of the valley of death I greet it with open arms. I am alone.

Take me to your shadows. I am death incarcerated. Take me to your valley of death.

-Smokey, Alameda

From The Beat: There's probably not a soul in jail who hasn't had dark feelings like the ones you put down in this piece... Maybe it's the boredom, maybe it's the physical loss of freedom, maybe it's the haunting memories that creep in when the distractions of the outside world aren't there. But there is that saying "The darkest hour is just before dawn." Do you believe that's true, that even when things are bad you one can find hope that things will get better, that in our own minds we even have the power to make decisions that will make it better?

Ain't No Pain Like Having A Child

What it do Beat Within it's ya' boy Young Cook

Giving words like books no song no hooks

Freestyle just write lead the pencil down the page

Giving up the robbing part but keeping up my old ways

Cause I got a lil' girl and one on the way

Gotta hold it down get paid ninja I'm Shady Bo

Having kids ain't cool unless you know what to do there

Can't just buy 'em clothes and give 'em food and not be there

Yo' kid gon' be scarred inside for life

So stop banging with no rubber if you don't want the parent life

It hurts so bad on some real shhh I can't take the pain

I wanna live a good life no more and break the chain

'Cause the tears of the heart hurt worse than the action

Knowing you set up for jail, or in the dirt so I'm packing

My barretta with no problem cause this is a messed up world

I'll give my life and the game up so my baby girl

Could live right with no problems on the real off back

This shhh making me mad not being there I'm sad

But I'm gone before I stop writing bounce up and go wild

On the real, ain't no pain like having a child

-Shady Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: We wish you could tattoo this poem on your wrist so every time you were about to lift up your hand to do some dirt, you'd see it and be reminded of how much you need to feel your love to fight your hate. There is nothing on the streets that matters more to you than your feelings as a father, and this is the poem that proves it. But can you keep these words alive in your heart they way they come alive on the paper? Start by putting down the guns.

*I made up my mind I'm done
with the crimes. It's time
to stay alive and be with
the one you love.*

The Real Part Two... Aka The Truth

What's up, Beat? Man, your boy still locked within this place called hell. I'm ready to get out now, but the system holding back. Man, it's weak to don't go back to court 'til the middle of February.

To keep it real, being locked up is changing my mind. Being away from my wife is driving me insane. I don't got no shame but playing the game. Beat, I know you know it's time to stay out the halls, stop getting locked up. Wearing another men's drawe's and another man's socks... that shhh drive me crazy.

If you locked up, you know how I feel. The food is grimy and this place is shady. I made up my mind I'm done with the crimes. It's time to stay alive and be with the one you love.

-Lil' Jao, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you've truly made up your mind that being home with the woman you love is more important than doing the things that lead you here, then you will be finished with places like this! That would be a great accomplishment for yourself and for your family. Don't forget this promise when you get out there and are faced with all the old temptations! Good luck!

One More Week

I leave next week on the 12th of February, my birthday. I just can't wait. When they release me I am going to an adult program in Oakland, so I will still be able to see my friends and family. I'm really ready to go, and I've been ready to leave. Being in here for already a month got me stressing and worried.

I already have my goals written out already so I have a plan when I get out. Someone told me that if you don't have a plan/goal then you would end up back in here. I agree with that because it's true. I didn't have a plan and that's how I had got caught up. I'm going to finish my program so they can help me out by getting my own spot, getting a job that I like, and be able to stay on track so I wouldn't have to go back living the fast life that I was living before. I believe in myself, I just have to watch out for the bad people I knew in the past and to watch out for the new people that I'm going to meet, male or female.

I just hope that my best friend is still waiting for me when I get out...until next time...if I don't come back...

-Cobra, Alameda

From The Beat: It's great hearing you sound confident and determined. Your friend gave you some good advice—glad you are listening to it. Keep us posted too!

Many Achievements To Be Had

There are so many things that I want to achieve in my life. I mean for starters I want to get out of the hall and back on with my life.

I want to get off probation because having that by your name is not going to get you anywhere.

I want to get back in school, finish high school, and go to college and make something of myself.

My parents always told me that I have all the potential in the world and I never believed them. So I went on living the life I was but as time went on and I got caught up with the system I realized that this is not the life I want to lead and that my parents were right—that I can do whatever I set my mind to. So I have taken all that they have told me and put it to use.

I hope to accomplish all the goals I have. I hope to grow old with my lady and live a long and fulfilling life. But for the most part I just want to make my parents proud. Because no matter how close you think your homies are to you they will never be as close as family.

-Anthony, Santa Clara

From the Beat: You bring up some very good points about family and living up to your potential. Now that you realize that you can achieve whatever you set your mind to it's time to make a plan for what specifically you're going to do to achieve your goals.

Achievements

Let's see my achievements. I have achieved some things, and I've also failed some things in life. I can't really remember some of my hardest achievements. But I certainly got goals and things I'm trying to achieve.

I'm trying to change my life around and that, to me, is going to be one of my hardest goals in life. Some things that I'm trying to achieve right now would be getting off probation. But the things I've achieved would be changing my attitude. It still needs improvement, but I've come along.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: We have all failed at some things (and achieved other things). What is most important are the achievements we set in front of us, the ones we need to plan for to get. It is good that you are working on your attitude, because that is so important to achieving all our goals. What is your plan for getting off probation? When you look ahead, say five years, what would you like to be doing? How will you get there?

My Lawyer Is A Punk

Times are hard
 Minds are wasting
 My hand is steady writing
 The Beat Within is pacing
 Too much, too little for too many people
 Chained by men in suits
 My dog is my equal

Opportunities, chances
 The judge romances
 The DA is a liar
 The whole courtroom dances
 My PO keeps killin' my case like cancer
 My lawyer is a punk, I don't stand a chance

Muthas like me is just livin' illegal
 Time keeps on slippin'
 And I'm high like a eagle
 Two milligrams a day
 Just to send my brain away
 I'm breaking doors and windows
 Catch me in a zone
 If I change who I am
 Then they'll leave me alone

-Ill Will, San Francisco

From The Beat: There is no question that you have major skills. But are you using those skills to your advantage? Anyone who reads this piece will see that you point the finger of blame everywhere but where it might do the most good. It's the judge. It's the DA. It's your lawyer. It's everyone but you... And yet, by the time you come to the end of this poem, you conclude that all of them will leave you alone if you change. So, where does that change begin, and how will it be shown in action? You've got too much going on to throw it all away in places like this

My Achievements

My achievement in life is to get money by getting a good job and saving up money to get a dirt bike and stay out of trouble. And another achievement is that before I came to jail I never read a book a day in my life, but once I came to jail I found out that it is important to read and get a education. And all the time I been in jail I done read three big books including a Holy Bible.

And now I thank god for slowing me down on what I was doing on the streets and giving me a chance to calm down and realize what I was doing. Now I understand, so now it's time for me to get out and start all over again, keep going to school and get a education and have kids.

-Chris

From The Beat: Even though the first thing you listed — getting a good job and saving money — is not yet an achievement (but a goal), you have definitely achieved some very fine goals already. Reading books for the first time (and realizing how much you can learn from them) is a major achievement. There are books on every subject in the world, and so you are unlimited in the amount you can learn, if you choose to. Understanding that your education is the key to your future is another major accomplishment. Now you have to reach your goal! Good luck.

Voting

Voting is important 'cause you can get someone in the White House against war. I think if everyone could vote that the laws would be different 'cause felons would look at the man's opinion on crime and immigrants would vote on the opinions of immigration.

-Chance, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish you had written more, because you show us that you are thinking, and that's already an achievement. We agree that if felons and immigrants could vote, things might be different. But what is puzzling to us is that the majority (more than half) of the people who have the power and privilege to vote don't take advantage of it. What about you? When you are 18, do you plan to use your power to vote? We hope so.

Walking Across The School Stage

My achievements was when I walked across the stage when I was in the 5th and 8th grade. And my next achievement is to walk across the stage in the 12th grade, and to change my attitude. 'Cause of my bad attitude I lost somebody that I really love. They didn't die, but you know how relationships are.

My biggest achievement is to pray and hope I get outta here on Friday, February 8th 2008.

-Torfirio

From The Beat: We hope by the time this Beat is done that you are already out of here and working on the goals you have set for yourself. Graduating from high school is one of the keys to your future success, but so is making sure you have an attitude that lets you move forward. You have what you need to succeed. Now, put it in practice... Good luck!

Staying Strong For My Mother

What's up Beat? Well, I got court in March and hopefully I'm goin' home with my family, But I might go to the Walden House school in Massachusetts because my PO wants me to go there.

But anyways, if the judge wants me to go to the Walden School, then I'm gonna stay strong like my mother always said to me. But I'm very sad because I always see my mother crying and hearing that my brother cry about me because he miss me and love me. All my family miss me, but I'm happy that I'm making a change better for my life and my family. I'm being strong all day.

But Beat, keep being strong and stay up! Much love and respect to all of you Beats.

-Pablo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We know how it hurts to see our mothers cry because of us, so we admire you for wanting to change her tears to smiles and pride. Even if you do have to go to Walden School so far from home, you stay strong for her and learn as much as you can so you never have to put her or yourself through this again.

My Achievements

The achievement I am working on is getting out of jail. Then I will go to a program for at least a year or two.

I need to get help for myself. While I am there I hope to do that. I don't want to go to the home because I feel separated from everybody - away from my family and from Santa Cruz.

I think that if I go into the program, in the long-run I will get help. There are a few things that I need to work on: anger management, social skills, job opportunities, and school.

School is very important to me. I want to graduate from high school. I am sixteen now and in the tenth grade but I've been out of school for 5 months. I am trying to graduate, but if that doesn't work out I will go for my GED.

I talked to my social worker today. She is the one who told me I am going to the group home. The thing that I don't like is that it may be out of state. I was kind of worried, but I will get through it. My social worker said that when I am 18 I will be done with the group home and can come back to Santa Cruz. Here, I can get into transitional housing, go to Cabrillo College and live my life.

-Carlos, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It sounds like you have thought a lot about this and have a realistic plan. Good for you! That is the first step to all achievements. You know what you need help with and that it may be difficult. With a mature attitude like that, you are right - you will get through it. Remember this when you are at the group home and feeling discouraged. You are on the right path. If you stay on it, soon you will be back home, enjoying your true friends, your family, and your life.

As President, I'd Help The People

I would vote for myself for President, if I could. I'd make myself rich. I'd buy a lot of property, set everyone free from jail. I'd make jails be different... better food, better people. I'd have real food like fried chicken, turkey, ham, yams, and sodas to drink. I'd have the people who run the jail not keep the kids in their rooms all day. I'd give them a hour phone time every day. They get more visits, and less time up in here.

I'd make the prisons better. I'd make the prisoners get treated better. They have more visits and more free time.

I'd make our jobs pay more, like \$13 an hour for housing companies, people who build houses. People who come from different countries, like Mexico, get treated the same way, and get the same money for their work.

Homeless people, they'd have somewhere to go. I'd build houses for them. People who were hurt by the Hurricane Katrina get new houses, \$2,000 each, and can live free for a year.

Drug addicts get put in a drug program until they feel better.

Babies get special treatment, new clothes, a better bed to sleep in when they're in the hospital. They get free milk, baby food, and their medical is free.

Schools can have higher educated staff. Teachers get paid more and students get to go to school free, through college.

I'd stop the wars, because that's how people get killed, and they can be with their family.

For kids like myself, I'd try to help them stay out of trouble, get 'em better discipline. I'd stop making guns and don't sell 'em to people in the streets, and try to stop the violence.

-Patrick, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you can write some of this without the Beat facilitator writing it down for you, then you could get a Piece Of The Week (instead of just a Co piece). We like the way you want to help people instead of putting people in war. Can you see a connection between the government going to war in Iraq, for example, and the war we read about on the streets every week? Where would you get the money to pay for the things you'd like to do? We would definitely vote for you for President if you promised these things (and explained how you would get them).

Living My Life (Part 1)

Living' my life ain't easy

You got to watch your back too much and worry about enemies
 I sometimes think about why our generation is like this

Live by the gun die by the gun

Too keep it real I'm gon' die by the gun... but that's just karma.

I been through too much too early

I grew up too fast, tryna get that fast money

Nowadays I don't think too much funny

I'm all about money if it don't make dollars it don't make cents

I hope I don't die when I get out

I pray every night for my mom and my sis 'cause it's
 negative

Out there and ninjas be ruthless

Toting Rugers that leave ninjas boneless

Let me stop 'cause I don't do a lot of talking

But to all my ninjas on parole keep it solid

And my big bra in the other unit... keep yo' head up

That's all I gotta say till next week.

To be continued.

-Lil' Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: Karma or not, it's not ever too late to change your mind about how you live. You have a mother and sister who love you, and you love them - and judging by the rhymes in this poem you have talent to burn. There are other ways to earn your money, ways that don't involve lockdown, bloodshed, or paying restitution. Why not step up and believe in yourself?

Achievements

Chea, what's good with The Beat? I'm still in this thang waiting to get out, feel me. But I wanted to talk about my achievements. I ain't really accomplished none of my achievements yet, but that's in the making. I'm tryin' to get this school thang out the way, feel me and get this real money and stop playin' 'cause I'm 'bout to have a baby in a few months.

I gotta stop playin' and get a job or do something constructive. A ninja can't keep coming back to jail and doin' stupid shhh. But on another note, I gotta get my life together first. But I'm out this thang. Y'all be smooth.

-D-Swoop, San Francisco

From The Beat: First, there is a lot in what you have written that we admire. Yes, you do have to get your life together. But, we hope when you say you have to "get this school thang out of the way," it means that you understand that the future you want for yourself and for your unborn baby depends on getting an education. Unless you do that, the only way you can make "real money" leads right back to where you are this minute, or worse.



Dear Mr. President,

Dear Mr. President I hope you get this message to you.
I just wanna say please do something about the poverty
In these streets. Give youth something to do
Instead of pistols packing some heat,
Please don't just talk, or try to give a speech
Do something about this problem
We have a goal to reach
We can work together to make things better in the
community
Let's take this opportunity.

-Jamil, Alameda

From The Beat: We hope the president hears you - (who knows, maybe he'll be on Airforce One with nothing to read, and someone will slip him this Beat!), but more importantly, we hope you hear yourself. What kinds of things do YOU do when you're out, to avoid getting caught up in situations where you might be 'packing heat'?

My A Level Achievement

I have achieved to get on A level (the best level in the hall). It was very hard.

How did I do it? Let me tell you how. I had to start doing my work in school. Stop getting the teacher mad. I had stop fishing. Talking through the vents. I had to stay of my window. Start being respectful to the staff. But at the end it all paid off. I got to be on detail. I got longer hot showers. I got extra plates and I got happiness.

-Bravlio, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's all you gotta do so things can go smooth. Just follow directions and do the right thing. If you do bad like be disrespectful that's not gonna get you anywhere in life. You're only gonna make things harder on yourself You do positive and positive things will come to you. Keep up the good work and try to see if you can get some of your peers to lead by example.

A Memorable Achievement

What's up Beat? Out of all the topics to choose from, I liked the one on achievements.

It's hard to think about positive things you've achieved when you're locked up, but one specific achievement popped into my mind. When I was in middle school, I played Pop Warner football. I played wide receiver and defensive end. We went the whole season undefeated - that meant we could go to Florida and stay at a Disney resort to finish the finals. I was excited as hell 'cause it was my first time leaving California and my first time on a plane.

We ended up winning the championship and being undefeated. Also, we found out later we would be on TV. We got some big ass plaques and got to meet the mayor of San Jose. The shhh was sick. I also had some fun with some females at the resort.

-Pacman, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is really something to be quite proud of. Why did you stop playing football? Do you think it would be something that could get you excited about life again and perhaps help you stop getting in trouble?

Ain't No Pension for The Dope Game

I woke up sweating from bad dreams with the dope
fiend spirits

Somebody's watching me man, I sure feel it

There's one bird on my shoulder

And you know I wanna kill it

Blood in my body and my enemies wanna spill it

My land going through it, lord won't you heal it?

My peers seem pretty sane but I feel like 'illin'.

Weekly I check on the business and my employees tell
me they chillin'

But my lil' bra tells me the drought's coming

So soon they won't be making the killing

This game got my folks running with no feelings.

My little cousin is still in the dope game,

Swearing to God he's going to make a million

And I had a dream his cap was being peeled ...man.

I ain't sold a stone since sixth grade

Because my best friend squealed,

And then a new hustle was unveiled,

So move out the way, get paid stubs

...and put that dope game on yield.

-T-Rex, Alameda

From The Beat: Great rhyme, you have what they call "transferable skills" in the work force. The ability to think quickly, put words together in original ways, and see beyond what's happening ten feet in front of you. Your land is going through it - and the people who can heal it are bright young people like you. Next up - show us you have a real plan for getting those pay stubs. Not just in words, but in action.

Kick The Shut Doors Down

I think it's time for me to kick the door down. I thing it's time to stay going down the good life road. No matter how much the bad life look good to me.

I think it's time for me to prove every body that said I will never make it to be anything wrong. Instead of proving them right.

It seems like I always talk about people how they think they know me, but they really don't know the real me

I think it time for me to show them the real me.

-Lil' Ols, Alameda

From The Beat: It looks like you've just led into your next topic for a poem to express your struggle, and that's a poem called 'The Real Me.' You ready to write it? We're ready to print it!



Voting for President

Romney – dropped out of the race because he couldn't hang with his homies.

McCain – got tortured by the VC, damn shame, now he's got a chip on his shoulder and he'll never be the same.

Clinton – you need to take a look into prisons like San Quentin and take a look at the people you don't give a shhh about and start thinking.

And Barack – You need to start acting yourself and stop acting like someone you're not!

-Politician, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There are few things more frustrating than to hear politicians making promises they will never keep. Senator McCain wants to fix the economy, but offers no way to pay for it. Senator Clinton claims that the presidency is about fighting for those who feel ignored and invisible to society, but her husband's administration pushed for questionable capital offense legislation. And Senator Obama has promised much, but has a limited national track record. Tell these candidates what you are looking for in the next president. Maybe they will listen more and promise less.

I Don't Know Who I Am

Who am I? Shhh, I don't even know been searching all my life and still don't know which way to go.

The judge and people in the courts think I ain't nothing but a hoe, but I'm just a lost soul in the cold.

Daddy please don't go, I need your love to help me grow. Mama please don't leave, your love is all I receive. That's why I'm in the cold looking for a soul cause no one wants to be alone.

Who am I? Still don't know. Hopefully I find out before I'm gone.

-Daddy's Lil' Princess, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful and heartbreaking piece. We are all afraid of being alone, and we are all searching for something.... If your parents can't be there for you, is there someone else you can turn to?

The Streets Can Be Trouble

The streets sometimes is fun, but sometimes you can get killed. Most of the time you're chillin' with your homies, but at the same time you can stay in trouble, 'cause your homies are gonna jump somebody and the police go' come and you gonna get caught up and you're gonna go to jail for doin' nothin', and then you gonna miss a lot of time. You gonna get on probation, you gonna get caught again. If you tryna sell drugs, like crystal, cocaine, weed, ecstasy, you gonna be in there for six months or three months, then you gonna get out and get caught, and that shhh ain't fun.

Actually, it is fun, but sometimes if you' selling drugs, people gonna die from doin' too much drugs. The people can't even think about that--that shhh is hard for the people living in the street. Some people live in cardboard boxes. I see people sleepin' dirty, musty, ugly, shady, 'cause they don't got money, 'cause the people livin' in the streets--if they have money, they're not gonna buy clothes, shoes, they're gonna buy drugs. They ask people walking by to go buy McDonald's (for them) all the time.

Most of the people die in the street because they're doin' too much drugs. The black mans, the white mans, is living in the street—is really hard for the people sleepin' in the streets. This is for all of the dopefiends livin' in the streets.

-Street Fiend, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have really observed the pain and desperation of some people in the streets and have a good heart for them. From what you know from your experience with the homeless and those who are addicted, what would you recommend to help them? What has been your role on the block, in your streets? What do you intend to do, when you get home, to keep yourself out of the streets and/or help those who seem to be stuck there, at least for now?

My Turn to Stop

To my mom I'm sorry for all the pain I put you through I go dumb but mom I'm through I sit in here missin' you.

Telling you how much I miss you. I

know I get money, that's why I dissed you.

Cutting school to sell dope just to help you

Get yo bills paid or just to hit the store

Mom I've done a lot of thinking I'm tired of bein' posted on the block

Servin' knocks, bustin' chops & glocks, runnin' from cops

Mom I think it's my turn to stop.

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: It is your turn to stop – or rather, it's your turn to start a real life. Because what you've been doing so far isn't living, it's surviving. The life of the truest, best and realest part of is just beginning, but you have to make it happen by turning away from the terror that you've been caught up in. Can you do that? Not just for your mom but for yourself?

Fonkin' For Nothin'

I'm tired of the stress that I put myself threw
I've been hustling since eleven but now it ain't coo'
I'm seventeen now still feeling brand new
I'm a paper chasing ninja holdin' it down for the crew
One on one or squad up we gon' do what we do and
I ain't trippin' off no ninja if he want it with me
I'ma keep that pistol cocked posted on the street
Rip the real, free my ninja Tony sometimes I wish I was never
Fonkin' never hustling it feels I was fonkin' with these ninjas
Fo' nothing
I'm tired of telling mama these lies, I'm looking for
Da good life hungry for a thin thick wife
With my hands on the work with my eyes to Christ and the
devil can't stop me I ain't going down without a fight out of
Sight I'm tired of writing ninja I'm through and don't ask
me what it do
You already know what it do

-Lil' D, Alameda

From The Beat: The devil you need to fight is the devil inside you, because he's whispering evil and tryin' to ride you/straight down to the gutter and under the ground/but if you listen hard there's another sound/that's the music of you own voice/you know you make your own choice/Funkin' for nothin' is devil's work/With dreams of a Rolls Royce/ But your eyes too sharp, you already see/That if you give it all up, that's how you'll get free.

*Every little vote
counts, I don't care
what people say.*

Who Am I?

What's up The Beat Within! My life consists of absent parents, friends, family passing away and prostitution.
My life feels like it will never get better.
I am only 16 but can speak like I am 30 and I've been through a lot. Everyday I treat it like it's my last.
Sometimes I like to lecture people 'cause I don't want them to be where I am--here in Juvenile Hall. Just wishing in life there was a stop, pause, rewind, or fast forward button, but I learned the hard way life is what you make of it.
The messed up part about having absent parents is that now that I am back in jail, I cry all the time. And when I go to court they're never there. The worst part is instead of saying they don't want to come, they say they're coming and they don't. Anything I usually want, I have to get on my own. I am not proud of it or anything I do, but I get what I want so it blinds me from my real life. I try to hide my pain in other peoples' happiness but when I lay down and go to sleep I know who I am-- just a girl who does stuff for money to live. So my life is just sad all together.
I can't seem to forget about anything but me when I lay down. I just think about my fiancé. Will, baby I love you.

-Princess, Alameda

From The Beat: We are so sorry that your parents aren't there for you, princess....but as you know, you are surviving without them. You are smart and strong, and we know you are capable of great things. What do you dream of for the future?

We Are The Future

If everyone could vote, including convicted felons, our country would be different, because everyone would be satisfied. Yeah they have committed crimes. But that doesn't give them a right to not put his or her opinion out there.

To me, that's like saying if Bill Clinton convicted a crime, he couldn't vote. He knows what's good because he'd been there, done that already and couldn't put out his opinion. Every little vote counts, I don't care what people say. It's just like basketball, every little play counts. And I think the age limit should come from 18 to 16 because young people are the future. If we are the future, we should be able to make votes for our future.

-Dj, Alameda

From The Beat: You make great points all the way through here, and yes, if votes didn't count, there wouldn't be such a long history of the government trying to keep minorities from doing it! As for the youth being the future, that's true, you are our hope. But then tell us, why are there so many young people who seem willing to just throw their futures away?

Too Late To Fly

I don't for that many achievements but the one that I do got is when I was a young teen I got in this summer program that taught kids how to be airplane pilots. During the day we took lessons and on certain days we would go flying.

We would go to the Oakland Airport and we would use these 4 person single engine planes. There would be a flying instructor would take off for us and when we were in the air he would let us fly. Flying is not that hard, it is almost like driving a car. We would fly around and land somewhere in Napa, and the students would switch seats and fly around. Then we would fly back to Oakland Airport. I stop going 'cause I moved out of my auntie's house and never got my certificate to this day.

I still wish I would have stayed and got my certificate.

-Jeremiah, Alameda

From The Beat: We called this piece "too late to fly" because, of course, it's never too late to fly, right? You could actually decide you want to get a pilot's license, and apply to aviation school. Or you could join the Air Force ... there are lots of ways to get back to this thing that you liked so much. Do you plan to try?



Greatest Achievement

What's up Beat this your boy Lil' Five. My greatest achievement that I made was when I first got out of jail. I felt great because it made me think that I don't never want to come back to jail. I know that that was a great achievement because jail is not for me. Because jail can get you killed or you can be institutionalized. So I know that I will never come back to jail.

-Lil' Five

From The Beat: That's a pretty good achievement but what achievement do you think would be better, staying out of jail, or getting out of jail? You decide. Anybody can get out of jail, the trick is staying out of jail. What are your plans so you won't have to come back to jail.

Sick Of This Place

What's up Beat, this yo boy T. I am sitting here thinking about when the fudge I am about to go home? Until then I'll see you next Tuesday.

Oh yeah I wish there was an earthquake so I could run out of the walls and never come back ever ever ever ever ever come back to this shhh hole place again.

-Fantasy

From The Beat: Why do you wish there was an earthquake so you can get out. Why don't you shake up all the feelings and negative decision making out of your body so you won't have to come back. Don't count on somebody else for you to get out, not even Mother Nature. You will be out someday and it will be the choices that you make that will either keep you out of jail or bring you right back. It's your choice.

Rain Turns Into Fire

I'm hot on the track, I'm hot on the track
Just got cut thinking I'm fresh

But I look at my shhh

And I'm like what the feezy

Man I guess he didn't know who I was

Maybe because he bugged

I'm Dylan, Dylan I spit rain with fire

And like the next Jay Z I'm gonna retire

Not I'm lying Dylan, just Dylan!!!

I be in the hood walking through the streets

And I'm hearing my beats.....

UH UH UH Free Dylan, who Free Dylan what!!!

Boom Boom, next thing you know I'm chilling with the homies

And these two pretty girls on me

They like Dylan-Dylan damn you fine

Let's not waste no time

We ate Pizza Hut 'cause they was hungry

Then I seen my homie Chavey

Riding in a car screaming the second Bra bra!!!!

Free My Baby Free Me Baby!!!

Check Check 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, is my mic on?

I'm leaving soon

And I'm tired of hearing these R&B cats sounding like looney tunes

Coming soon to your stores.

-Dylon

From The Beat: This is a Creative piece but where does the rain turn into fire? You have some rhyming skill. Are you planning on doing anything with your talent?

Who I'm Scared To Lose

First off, I would like to start off by sayin' I love you mama.

The person I'm scared to lose the most is my mama. My mom is my everything. If it wasn't for my mama, I wouldn't be alive today. My mama is the best thing that could happen to me. Her love is the best love I ever felt. No matter what she says or does, I will always love my mama. No matter what, if you reading this I love you and will always be your baby boy mama.

I truly do love you forever mama.

-Rene

From The Beat: Your Mama wants you to love her, but mostly she wants you to love YOURSELF. Love yourself enough to protect your body, your freedom, and your future. Do you do that now? Or do you put those things in danger?

Inspiration

Something I achieved is being able to write poetry. One person that inspired me was Maya Angelo. I read one her poems and noticed how happy and relieved. It made me want to start writing it makes me not want to go rob someone when I'm mad instead I just write and think about life and death.

Death is the cause of life. To die you have to live and to live you have to die. When a person dies, an innocent person comes in this World. When that innocent person's life is taken, the world cries. I don't mean people I mean the sky when it rain the world is crying.

-Inspired

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you be inspired to achieve your goals. You have some interesting point of views. You're right death and life go hand in hand. But what do you mean by saying "that the world cries"?

Hella Heated!

I'm hella mad because my cousin's memorial was on January third, '08. He got killed on January third of '07 by the police. I think that the police are some punks because without the guns they're not shhh. The police be talking hella shhh even if they hella small, they know if you hit them, you can get shot. To me, they some punks. But that's how it is in this world. RIP Dilio you will always be in me, love you bra bra you're boy Peter also known as Nacho.

My cousin got killed because somebody said he had a gun and he ran when 5-0 pulled over so they shot him from the back. They some marks. That's how he got killed.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: That's messed up. We're sorry to hear about your cousin. It's messed up when you already have people in the streets killing each other. But then you have the officers of the law that are suppose to serve and protect the community that go around and only make things worse instead of helping out. How can you address this issue to the community, or the city itself? You need to bring police brutality to somebody's attention, maybe your mayor.

My Achievement From Football to Jail

Well let's start off by saying my first achievement was when I was 12 years old and I had sex for the first time.

Another achievement was when I played football for O-High even though I was a freshmen I ain't start but I got playing time. I must have been a good player because they let me play or they was hella weak! But we won some games to make to the playoffs even though we lost in the semi-finals.

I was a candidate for MVP freshman year I had 5 interception and 20 tackles for a rookie I had the other team wanting me to play for them but I said "no, I'm straight, I aint no trader!" I was an all-American too.

-All American Uzzy

From The Beat: Well those are some achievements to be proud of. What other achievements do you have? Do you have any long term goals that you wanna achieve? Do you have any big dreams that you are chasing? Life is about goals and achieving them. What kind of goals do you have?

What's Going To Happen?

I am kind of surprised because now I know that I have some where to go when I get out.

I turn eighteen next month and I get released on that day. The reason why I'm here is because I ran from my group home. Then I went home to my mom house.

At the end of December my mom had got evicted and now she stays in a shelter.

I had nowhere to go so I just turned my self in.

When I get out I'm going to a program for folks from the ages of 18-24. It sounds way better then a group home because I'm going to be around adults who know what they want and what I want to do to there.

I might have things in common with some and I might not, but I know that I will be able to get along with them. I'm going to have my own space, finish school, be able to get a job. If, and when I finish the program I will be able to get my own place to stay. I know that I will be able to do it because I believe in myself and I have people who also believe in me too. The program is in Oakland so I will still be to see my family (and my boyfriend).

-Cobbra

From The Beat: You have another chance to make things right in this new program—it's a great chance! You have to stay positive. You can and will finish the program if you have the discipline. What challenges do you think you will face? How will you deal with them?

Time To Step Up To The Plate

Man I miss my ninjas hella much. My ninja Twin (Derik & Donavon) Lil' Sean, Taco & my sister Queazy. The twins, Lil' Sean & Taco are more than my like my brothers than my patnas. I'm glad that the twins, Lil' Sean & my sister Queazy are in a group home so that they can change their lifestyle a little bit.

I'm hecca mad that my bra Taco gone R.I.P. We all been through hecca shhh. I can't wait till we reunite and are back together.

Anyway I'm about to be back out again to a group home so I can change my lifestyle. I'm ready to change. When they send me to this group home I'm about to get it over with.

When I get out of my group home I about to go back to my school and finish high school and stay out of the Hall.

I miss my family and they miss me. It's time to take control of my life, which I should have done already. It's '08 and it's time to step up to the plate.

-Bra Bra

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you are ready to change, but how do your friends fit into your new plans? Will your patnas support the changes you are making for yourself?

Just Found Out

Man, I just found out Lil' D got killed. He was too young, didn't even have a will. It's hecca scandalous, all my brothers die, leaving us others to wonder why.

That's why I need to get out. To learn what life's about.

RIP Carl for everything I do. RIP Lil' D, a victim to the streets. It's crazy when I think 'bout my friend's heart can't beat. Man I got a lot of thoughts. Man we all from the streets. Guess it wasn't solid cause ninjas starting to chase. Man, they're knocking ninjas down. Every time I look around, man it's crazy.

-Shaqueola

From The Beat: It is crazy and tragic. Do you think you can focus your sadness, and use that to become a positive role model for yourself and for the others who may also fall victim to the wars of the streets?

Jail

I used to talk about people I knew in jail like, man they got a lot of time to think. But this place is hell without fire if you ask me. Staring at those four walls make me go crazy. Talking is dead but if you listen to me speak then it's very much alive.

Please believe me, jail got me appreciating going to school. I can't wait to get out and go do some school work. When I get out of jail I'm gonna be a classified nerd. I don't wanna see another police car. You won't catch me calling 911. I'm not coming back to the hall.

-Rayna

From The Beat: Great to hear this Rayna! Is there an adult who can be your mentor, to keep you focused on school and help you prepare for college? What's your plan upon release?

Still Here

Yes Beat, this the Tweety once again. I'm still here, you feel me.

My co-partners got released.

I'm hecca stressing up in here... I need to get the heck out of here. You know I'm going crazy. I miss my family and most of all my boyfriend Carlos, man you just don't know how I feel right now. I'm in here with too many females and you know how that goes, a lot of females together is nothing but drama.

Anyways, like I said I need to get out. Got to go.

-Lady Dimples

From The Beat: You're piece confused us. You say you hate jail, and you say you want to leave. And yet, you end the piece with a gang call, which tells us we're going to see you in jail again soon—because you aren't going to change. Is that really what you feel? Are you willing to risk it all?

Out and In Again

What's up Beats? This is your girl Tete. It been a minute since y'all heard from me 'cause you know I got free. But unfortunately I'm here again, in the hall.

I miss The Beat and my people on lockdown, haha. But you know yo' girl gonna be back on the outs soon, you already know my 1st spot gonna be Sizzlers (Restaurant), and my second my ninja house. Love ya Beat. See y'all next week.

- Tete

From The Beat: What else are you going to do when you get out? What's your plan to stay out?

Drama

Drama, so much drama in my life. I feel like a person with no life to live. I'm so discouraged right now. Everybody tells me, baby it will be ok, but I know that it won't. I just want to be free, mentally/emotionally, spiritually, physically.

I'm trapped with nowhere to go no one to love me, or show me that they care, or even to feel them there... I have a scar for life that no one can see, because it's within me. You might see it when you talk to me...it's a scar of defeat, to me its trial/tribulations. I have a testimony. I know it ain't worth money, to some it may sound funny but hey I can only be me, I see me being free... 'cause I am the smacker of the century.

-Smacker of the Century

From The Beat: It sounds like you've been through a lot of terrible things. But you are NOT defeated. You are a survivor. Once you are free again, can you get help from a counselor or elder who can help you heal and understand your wounds?

No Faith

My family thinks when I get out, I'm gonna do wrong. They think since this is my second time locked up, I'm gone do the same thing. But I'm going to be strong. I'm gonna show them I know what's right from wrong. They seem to think they know what I'm gonna do, they think I'm so confused that I don't know what to do. But I'm gonna show them.

I'm gonna get out and go back to college 'cause I have the knowledge.

I never want to come back so I gotta get back to the way I used to act before I lost my innocence. I was falling, and I couldn't get up but now I picked myself up. I'm gonna get back on track 'cause I have to show my family that I could change. I'm tired of bring locked up.

I'm locked up in they won't let me out. Every court date I think they gone give me a release but instead they try it keep me. I'm innocent I just made some mistakes that I'm not gonna face no more 'cause being locked up isn't the spirit. Same food, surrounded by the same group man I got to get out, gotta do right when I get out. 'Cause I ain't going out this time. I ain't coming back best believe that!

-Christina

From The Beat: It sounds like your family needs to see your actions before they are willing to hear your words. The ball is in your court, and it sounds like you are ready. We wish you the best in achieving your goals, and staying far far away from jail!

My Goals

I'm just a natural person with goals that I got to accomplish. While in my heart I sense this is a bad place. I'm going to make a bad thing good by getting top citizen, student of the week every week. I just be handling my business.

After this place I'm going to ROP in Nevada for 9-15 months depends how I'm doing. But anyway, when I'm in ROP I'm going to try to get my high school diploma. When I get out of there I'm getting my license and get a car, I already got a job when I get out so I'm set for that.

I'm going to be 18 when I get out and get an apartment and I'm gone be set.

-Freeman

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a good game plan on how you're gonna go about accomplishing your goals. Your mind is on the right track. Don't let anything distract you from achieving your goals.

Achievements

What I would like to achieve is to be able to stay out of the hall. This is hella boring and a waste of time. I got a lot of better shhh that I could be doing on the outs.

-Domz

From The Beat: You're exactly right. We know you have better things you should be doing then wasting your time in the hall. But think about what you doing that's bringing you here. Learn from your mistakes so you won't be wasting your time in here.

The Billion Chinese Votes

If everyone could vote the world would be hectic. Right now, today people having problem getting along. We would end up having a Chinese person as a president, because there's a billion of them. Real talk.

-Ghost Writer

From The Beat: You right if everyone could vote the world would be hectic. But what makes you think there would be a Chinese president? How about an African American President, or a Latino?

Barak Obama

We should have a black man as president for at least one time or many more times after this. This ninja (Obama) looks like he's brainwashed though, like it's going to be the same as the past.

Ain't nothing going to change especially if Hillary Clinton win that shh gone be out of pocket. This shh is terrible the whole election situation.

-Selean

From The Beat: Why do you think that nothing's gonna change. Don't you think that anyone president is better than bush? Or do you think Bush is doing a decent job in looking out for his fellow American citizens?

What's Good Beat

It's your boy Turk. I'm hella mad because CYA taking hella long to come get me. This unit shhh getting hella old.

But anyways this might be the last time I write in The Beat, so I want to thank the staff that took care of me. Mr. G, my ninja Pope, who was trying to help me become a man. Ms. T, my step mom, and big Watts.

-Turk

From The Beat: We wish you the best of luck. Do your time don't let it do you. We know that CYA is a hectic place but you have to stay strong and don't fall deeper into the system's trap. Everyday think of ways to improve and better your self.

Driving

My first time driving was an interesting experience. Nobody really taught me how to drive, I just learned on my own by watching people. When I first got behind the wheel it was cool. I was doing good for the first time. I was so excited, I wanted to drive later that day.

The second time was okay I crashed into a pole though. I was scared. Everything came out okay though.

-Skittles

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this story about learning how to drive. Was it hard for you to get behind the wheel after crashing? How do you feel about driving now?

To My Angel

You are my angel,

My gift from above,

I am addicted to you,

I can never get enough,

Your face a beautiful as heaven itself,

You make me feel things I never felt,

Your skin as smooth as silk and soft as velvet,

Your eyes so precious to speak for themselves,

Words can never tell it,

Your scent more pretty then the most finest rose,

One touch of your fingertips,

Puts butterflies in my stomach,

And leaves tingles in my toes,

I love you so much,

I'd pick you over any woman,

I'd choose you before more money than I could swim in,

To me money does not matter,

It's you that I want,

And until I have you here in my arms,

It's my thoughts and dreams your face will haunt.

-Vincente

From The Beat: As the great poet William Butler Yeats put it "Always, when I clamber to the heights of sleep/Suddenly I meet your face". Who is the girl you wrote this for, and has she written you poems in return? Or is this a general love poem inspired by the idea of a love you haven't found yet?

My Birthday

I'm mad because tomorrow is my birthday and I'm stuck up in here. I'd rather be out celebrating it with my family and people who care about me instead of people I barely know.

I'm also mad because I'm about to turn sixteen in here. I could have been doing a lot of things. I could have got my ID next month because I already held my permit for 5 months now. I also could of got a car but I'm just going to have to wait.

This is my first birthday being without my family. The only thing that can make my birthday better is if I can be with my family.

I can't wait to get sentenced because I'm getting tired of being in here because I don't get to do what I want. If I go to CYA or ROP I know that I get more freedom. I also want to get sentence already because I just want to finish my time.

-Kevin

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that you have to spend your birthday in here! We would rather you spend it with our family and loved ones too. But now you got yourself in a messed up situation and you're doing a good job of accepting the consequences for your actions. The only thing you can do now is strive to make your situation better. Learn from your mistakes. And make sure you don't get locked up for anymore.

What's Good?

What's good with y'all Beat? I'm still up here in the halls doing dead time. This shh is not cool, I can't stand being locked up no more. This is my 15th time up in this place.

My PO got me messed up, on the real. Trying to send me to Nevada for 12 months.

Hahaha, I'm gonna do it moving on the staff in Nevada. I'm gonna make it back to the bay regardless, I don't care how far Nevada is. I made it back from LA. What's stopping me now? I'm not trying to be up in the mountains with a bunch of stuck up white people.

-Jake

From The Beat: Do what you feel you need to do, but running away from your problems is not the solution. You're going to keep on running 'till when? Is that how you want to live your life? On the run from the authorities? Just get your time over with and move on with your life. If you like eating county food and wearing country draws, then keep on running.

Achievement

Well I don't really know of a big achievement that I'm proud of. So I'm gonna talk about a big achievement that I would like to accomplish.

The achievement I want to complete successfully is to stay out of jail. That's going to be a hard one, but if I put my mind into it I can do it. I will have to let some things go, and its not going to be easy.

I need to keep my mind focused on something else rather than thinking about the hood all the time. Of course I'm not going to forget about it completely. I got much love for it. But when I get out I must make a couple changes and the first one is to get a job. I think if I get a job I can stay off the streets a little 'cause I'll be busy doing something, and the other major thing is to focus on my family more. So if I do what's in my heart, I should be able to achieve.

-Staying Out Of Here

From The Beat: It sounds like a hell of achievement but we believe you can accomplish it. We're not trying to tell you to forget about the hood, but you do need to start thinking about yourself. You don't wanna make a career out of going in and out of jail. That's not gonna put food on the table. But you're headed in the right direction.

Gangsta Poem

A wise ninja once told me
Life was short and rocky and harsh
And you can't be a sucka
To walk that path you must be solid to march
Keep yo' mouth closed eyes open
Remember stay hungry and humble
Be ready for life's rumble, learn to tuck yo' bundles
Show no emotion when you do dirt
Keep that face with a smirk
Because a hater gone get you hurt
If you putting in all the work
Never trust a fake friend
That love to pretend
Because he'll look that judge in the eyes
And bring yo' world to an end
Snitch leave you in a ditch and, dip without a care
You could rot in prison for life, as long as they aint the
ones there Treat others with respect that don't make
you a punk
A real man put his hands up and fight
A fake grab that pistol and dump
Walk with your head high
Don't let no one stomp on your pride
Remember it take a real ninja to walk in that life.

-Codine

From The Beat: What's your definition of a "real ninja"? And what's your definition of a "gangsta's life"? What is the message you're trying to get across? We have a suggestion don't put any work in at all and that way you won't have to worry about your fake friends snitching.

Young Capy

Was up beat this is Young Capy again from Oakland writing from weak ass camp. I'm just up here waiting till April, so I can get out and be in the hood with the family just doing the thing I do best out there, you feel me?

Well this Saturday I'm going on a home pass so I'm gonna be on one for 12 hours. Then come back to camp and do the same shhh, when I go on my over nites. I'm going to my RIP homies graves and kick it. Then I'm gonna try to go to school and get a job so I won't have to rob people no more.

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: What kind of a job would you get? And what do you mean "try" to go to school? Like Yoda says "There is no try. You do, or you do not." Which side of The Force are you on?

Too Young

He only fifteen now he faces the death penalty
Don't even know if he can take the penitentiary
What he gone do to get outta the situation
Walking back and forth in his cell keep pacing
Never thought his life will be this way
All the ninjas he hang with be acting hella fake
Never ever trust yo' friends
Sucka ninjas will snitch when you think they ya' men's
Ninjas never last that's the truth
They can't charge you for murder if you ain't got no
proof
My life over at a young age
I can't take it no more living in this cage!

-Jamarco

From The Beat: Trapped like an animal in a cage and it's hard to not to feel angry or any kind of rage. Life is all about making mistakes and learning from them. You can't trust anybody with your life. You have to trust yourself and no one else. Nobody is gonna bail you out when you're locked up in the pen. If you want to live institutionalized that's your decision. But if you want to have your freedom you already know what you need to do.

My Opinion

If everyone could vote the world would be dumb because people would vote for dumb people like Bush, or people would vote for the world to blow up. The people would vote for one dumb ass ninja.

If I could vote I would vote for Obama because he wants to help the troops, and they need help, help for the war and help to come home.

-John

From The Beat: We all wanna see more help to the troops. We don't support the war but we have to support the troops because it's not by their choice that they're out there. What would you do if you were president? What would you like to see happen?

Obama '08!

If I could vote for president, I'm voting for Barack Obama period. I'm voting for him for president, he not fully black but he is as close as it's going to get. But even if he become president or not I'm not sure how could he help me or things that's happening in the streets? I don't know, even if he became president how can he help minorities?

-Marcus

From The Beat: You're right how do you think one person gonna help us or the community. He has to worry about all the rich people too. What can he do to help the people in your community? If you could write a letter to the president what would you say?

Achieve What's Best

If I could achieve something, it'll be school. Because I go, and then I'll stop going. It's like it gets too stressful in class. Sometimes I hate using my brain on things I'm not interested in. I don't know why but that's just me, I can see if it was about money... I'll achieve that fast (serious now)!

But I do have to go to school to achieve, because that's how I'm going to make money. If you don't have an education, you don't have nothing. Education will get you somewhere ...basketball and football ain't for everybody.

So do something you like that, that you enjoy, that'll make you money, like business, architect, landscaping, salesman, anything.

It'll get you somewhere other than standing on a corner, get shot and killed or jail to 25 to life achieve something that you can put your mind to. I wanna achieve a lot of things, and I have to take steps, one by one, to make it

So school is something I want to achieve.
RIP Lil' D, Davon, D-Scrilla and the rest.

-Lil' Ja'Corey

From The Beat: Right on, it's those small steps that will take you where you want to go. As for school, what if you treated it like a job, where you put in your time doing some things you like, some things you didn't, and you got paid back in knowledge, self-respect, and a chance for a better life in the future!

My Achievements

I'm trying to achieve staying out of jail. Keep the girl I got, the job I got and take care of my daughter. So my loved ones can be happy for me, and all who thought I would end up a failure, be pissed at them selves for talking shh.

I'm gonna make it, forget all you haters. For all keep your heads up and have faith in yourselves.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: We're proud of you. We like to hear you say that you believe in yourself and that you're gonna make it. We believe in you to and don't even listen to the people that have nothing but negative things to say.

Greatest Mental Achievement

There's a big achievement I have accomplished. It has been the achievement accepting God into my life. Ever since I have accepted God into my life, my life has become great.

My life has changed for the better. Everyday I have woken up with a smile on my face. Hard to believe because I'm locked up. Well there's nothing to be mad about I did crime so I'm doing the time.

Oh well, live everyday to its fullest. But ya my biggest achievement is accepting God into my life.

-Btb

From The Beat: Congratulations! We hope that you reflect on how you were living your life. You made a couple mistakes, it's all good just pick yourself back up. You did the crime, but do the time and don't let it do you. Keep achieving and striving for your goals and stay with a positive attitude.

What's Up Beat!

It's yo' homeboy Dopey, hittin' you up from camp. I'm back up here hangin' out with the homies, tryin' not to think about the stuff that's goin' on in the outs. The good thing is I don't gotta do my program over.

Hopefully I will get out in May or June. I plan on doin' a better program then last, I'm also getting back in the GED class, so I don't leave here empty-handed. I also plan on get my own house, and job, and be with my lady and the homies.

TBW: Can you be with the homies without getting locked up? And how many people have died from this BS?

I know too many people that have died because of gang bangin'. Gangs are always going to be around, and the only thing new is the soldiers. I know there is no way out 'cause I'm not thinking of a way out... I don't want out. It's my way of life.

The only way is to keep it solid!

-Dopey

From The Beat: First off, thanks for answering this question honestly. The Beat is stronger when our writers speak the truth, even if it's a painful one. And as much as we want to try to argue you down and tell you how messed up that "way of life" is, you've probably heard it all before. But would you at least try to break it down to us - what's the appeal? What is it that makes you willing to throw away your future, your hopes, and your own voice that knows what's right and wrong? Why don't you want out?

Inside One Man's Mind

As I sit,

And think to myself,

What's wrong with me,

What do you want me to do oh my mighty Lord,
I am only one person who can only take so much,

But yes has lost more than enough,

Most of which of what I admired and loved,

Now has become non present,

Missing to my eyes,

Missing in life,

They've become voices in the wind,

But yet such beautiful sounds,

And since this,

Things are becoming different,

Some going up,

And some going down.

-Vincente

From The Beat: It's a gift to be able to hear those "voices in the wind." And it seems like here you hear them and help us here them too. When did you first start writing poetry? Was it when you first came to jail? Or earlier? Does being able to put your feelings down on paper help you get through the hard times?

Lockdown Wake Up Call

This unit is hella bootsie. I can't stand being here.

I got to court tomorrow. I'm supposed to get out, but my PO hating. If I get out I won't come back.

I'm 16 and now I'm a felon. I don't have any strikes though. When I get out I'm gonna chill out. I don't want to do any Y time, I would be going there but they reduced my charges. Basically I have a chance to change my life and I'm gonna take it. No more robbing people and getting caught...

-P

From The Beat: We're glad to hear you say that you wanna chill and stop robbing people. Doing things like that will guarantee you come back to jail and maybe catch some serious time. You got an opportunity to change your life please don't waste it.

Money

Money makes people go crazy.

Money makes people get killed.

When money came in this world that's when everything start going bad. Just imagine if there wasn't any money in the world, like it never existed? The world would be hecka different.

But money equals power so people with money thinks they are the shhh but they're not.

-Sweet F Mae

From The Beat: These are some profound statements you are making. If you didn't have to think about money, what would you want to do with this life?

Achieving

To achieve is to make it to something that you want to do or if you have a goal to be a doctor. That's achieving your goal. That's what I think it is. Like if its something you achieve in life for instant if you get a degree or graduate or get a good life, like me, my goal or something that I want to achieve in is go to college in Atlanta and get a degree. But first I got achieve my goal to get out and do cool in the Y. But I'll be back soon, yeah though to achieve something is to live up and do it.

-Roro

From The Beat: That's what life is all about. It's about setting goals for ourselves and try to achieve them. You have some really positive goals that you should achieve. Do your time in the Y and try to learn everything that you can. You're not gonna be locked up forever. When you get out don't forget about your goals. Stay positive and motivated.

It Wasn't All Bad

Besides being locked- up and not being able to see my family. Being locked up wasn't all bad. For instance, I started to eat healthy and started to go to school. I got some credits and finally passed the exit exam. Which I didn't do so well in the outs.

But other than that I don't want to be in here no more. But I'm tryin' to make a negative turn in to a positive. Feel me?

-Boxer

From The Beat: What would really make it positive would be if the time you spent locked up helped you really figure out what it is that you want from your time on the outs. Have you learned things at camp, either in school or from mentors, that will help you do better (and more positive) once you are released?

In Two Years I Want To Be...

In two years I want to be... out of jail working hard towards my career, in college working on my major.

In 5 years I want to be ready to graduate from college, and hopefully I'm already working full time. My dream is to design jewelry and pursue other hobbies that I have. I need to make money in order to live because I plan on living alone. I have people I can lean on for support, like my immediate family like my mother, father, sisters, and few of my real close friends.

-Carl

From The Beat: You're unlucky on the one hand, because you've had troubles, but lucky on the other, because you DO have that family support, and you also have real dreams and positive ideas for your future. Are there programs in camp that you can use?

Love Of My Life

You are the one who keeps me going,

Without you I'd be lost,

When you leave my heart turns from,

A fire boiling love,

To a lonely bucket of frost,

If I lost you I'd probably go insane,

Nothing would cure me from the heartache and pain,

I know we have many hurtful fights,

But if we keep loving each other,

Then glued together we'll be for all of our lives,

I wrote this poem for only one meaning,

That since you came in my life,

My heart has stop bleeding.

-Vincente

From The Beat: "My heart has stopped bleeding." It's a blessing to find someone who can inspire you, help you write poems, and best of all - change your life around. Is this blessing helping you make the turnaround you need to stay out of trouble?

Achievements

I would like to achieve my goals some day, but every time I am out I'm playin' wit them thangs. Someday I'm gon' change 'cause I ain't tryna end up like the ninjas in Max. Ninjas say they get that time they whine and cry, so stop committing crimes if you can't handle the time.

-Lil' Damani

From The Beat: Damani, no one should have to handle that time, whether they "can" or "can't." So when are you going to stop playing with fire - you say someday you'll change, but why not make that "someday" today?

Stress: I Want My Son To Have A Better Life Than Me

What's goin' on? I've been in camp since about a month.

I've already had my home pass but it wasn't the best. I went home and there nothing but drama. I was hella upset when I came back. Right now I got the most messed up situation with my baby mama. My life is going down right now but I'm trying to do whatever I can for my son and when he's born you know I'm going to get a job.

I've been stressing so bad I don't know what to do, I feel like giving up on life, but if I give up on life then that means I gave up on my son's life, and that's something I don't wanna do... 'cause I'll be just like my dad.

I'm different -- I want my son to have a better life than me.

Alright Beat, I'm gone.

-Looney

From The Beat: You answer your own questions in this piece. Even while you talk about the despair, you also find your own reasons for hope. You have hope, you believe in a better future, and that hope is what will get you through this. Have you run? No. Have you gotten into fights? No. Have you given up? No. And that means you won't give up out there.

It Feels So Real

Her smile, her face, her touch
It feels so real

It's dark her touching me fills my body up with chills
Her long hair and brown eyes is more than I can spare
But her lips I'm kissing make me speak
The real strawberry and kiwi is all I can smell
Lingerie and her soft skin
I can show her off for show and tell
When she smiles it fills
My heart with joy me holding her fill the world with joy
stilettos or pumps she can make her rump jump
But if she was to turn around
You can see her sugar plum.

-Jerm the Worm

From The Beat: With talent like this, you need to get out of Juvenile Hall and back in school, where you can keep expanding your vocabulary and learning what you need to do so you become such a success that girls are showing YOU off for show and tell! Peace.

If Everyone Could Vote

If everyone could vote it would be a good idea but immigrants would start voting ...and this is not their country. And I don't think it fair. I would vote for my homie Lil Quis because we would go stupid in the white house. The Navy would get active.

-Shonte

From The Beat: Most everyone we turned around and looked at in our office has at least one relative who was born in another country. And you best believe we consider ourselves Americans. This whole country is a country of immigrants. In fact, the only people here who AREN'T the children of immigrants are Native Americans/Indians! Don't buy into the hate. You're better than that.

Achievements

I have a lot of achievements... I been on a baseball team that has went to the state championship and won 2nd place, but I was so proud. That was the best achievement I've achieved so far.

I have achieved a lot of things, but most important is that I'm still alive.

-Go Diego Go

From The Beat: Yes, we should be grateful for every day we breathe, you're right. On the other hand, we sure hope you haven't let this setback take you too far away from baseball... you can still play, right? And maybe coach as well, to share that feeling of achievement with the next generation!

The Only Way I Know

"I got so much love for the game that I feel ashamed"

Roses are red violets are blue
I miss the way I be lovin' you
I stay up in my cell waitin' to ball
But every time I beat my meat
I know my life is goin' to hell
The way I be livin' ain't no joke
Many people die by slittin' their throat
But I keep my head up just waitin' to see
If I'm gon' turn my life around to benefit me
But the only way I know how, the only way I can see
Is endin' up in the ground with a bullet in me.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Roses are red, violets are blue/you may love the game but it don't love you/there's folks in your hood that still try for the good/who lead for unity, to heal the community/the disease is hood sickness and there's only one immunity/find a goal and then stick to it/get out of the game, don't try to go through it.

I'm Stressing

I'm shelled out, because when I first came in here, I went to court. My Momma said she'd come to court for me, but she didn't answer, so I went to court alone.

After court I was given a court-ordered phone call... she still didn't answer, so I called my PO and she told me that she went to jail. She's been incarcerated for 2 days. Then my PO told me that my two brothers ran from his group home.

Now I sit here in hall waiting to go back to court on Feb. 11th and today, Feb. 5th, I just heard about 7:30pm tonight that my brother came back to Juvenile Hall and my little brother has nobody to take care of him except my gramps, who is 79 years old and has Alzheimer's.

That's what I'm really stressed about -- my little brother. My twin, I know he can take care of himself and so can I, but my lil' brother and gramps can't! Love...

-Lil' Twin

From The Beat: Ugh - we're sorry to hear that you and your family are all in such a hard predicament. This is what they mean when they say that if one person in a family does time, everyone in the family does time. Keep us posted on what happened, and we hope that you are all able to be together soon. And keep your head up in here!

Lil' Quis for President

Man I think I should be president of the U.S because I go silly in the U.S and I think that if I don't, some black person will make it, I hope.

-Lil' Quis

From The Beat: You want to be a leader - we like that. Even if the presidency isn't what you try for, you could be a leader in some other profession, if you really let yourself dream big. But what kinds of changes would you need to make in the life you're living right now in order to become a success? And what has kept you from making those changes so far?

Achievements

My achievements that I want to accomplish is to get back on the block. The judge sent me to Camp Sweeney.

My brotha is up in there so I ain't trippin'. When I'm back on the block I'm finna stay outta jail. I'm finna get me a job and get my money flowin'. I'm gonnna be stackin' in the legit way. The dope dealin' way is fun but it only last fo' a cool minute. I'm finna do what I do. To all my ninjas, keep it pimpin'!

-Insane Viet

From The Beat: We'll see you at camp! What kind of a job do you plan to look for? Have you thought about where you want to work, where you might look? Have you also thought about what other things in your life you might have to change in your life?

Checkin' In

What's goin' down this the homeboy from Livermore. I'm up in this so-called cell not doin' nada. Just wanted to say something right quick since I got a pencil and there ain't nothin' else to do. I just wanted to tell all you homeboys to keep it solid and do what you do to stay solid.

But whenever to tell all you homeboys get out do things the smart way and stay up out these halls 'cause I know this ain't what y'all wanna see, we need to be in our hoods putting it down... that's were we need to be.

Much love and respect to all locked up.

-Lost homie

From The Beat: Your definitely not about taking care of your grandparents and your baby cousins? You don't mention going to school to better yourself so you can make your family and neighborhood proud? Are you about getting jobs and feeling the self-respect that comes from knowing you can earn a living legit? Because all this talk about the "homies" and "banging" ... that just leads to funerals, ankle cuffs, and tears.

Achievements

I did many achievements in my life but the one that I really want to accomplish is to be a good role model for my little sister. Ever since she was born, I've been getting locked up.

She have been visiting me with my mom when I was in the halls. I don't want my little sister to remember that I was in jail. I don't want her going up to me when she get older and say that she visited me in jail.

I want her to think positive about me, not negative.

So my achievement for me this year is to get out of camp, and be a good role model for my little sister.

-Linh

From The Beat: You must look like a god to her, just imagine how much she looks up to you – and just think. When she sees you doing right, it will make her a stronger person in this world. It must be a trip to realize how much you are needed, that you matter in another human being's heart.

Voting For The President

You know I'm voting for the best man.

I really don't know about electing but I would vote for Obama. He will make history. But if he doesn't, we are still going to make history: The first woman in the history of the United States of America.

If I were old enough I would vote for Obama because he has a strong possibility to win. Save the drama for yo' mama ...and vote for Obama

-Go Diego Go

From The Beat: You may not be able to vote in this election, but you'll be old enough for the next one, and don't forget it's in the local elections that you REALLY need to be on point – that's where they add on all the propositions that affect community college funding, minimum wage laws, trying youths as adults, and lot of the other issues that will affect you and your loved ones perfectly.

Unloyal People

Unloyal people. I don't know how they can sleep at night, after knowing that they just snitches on somebody and got them locked up or got them into same sort of trouble by the snitch.

My dream is that one-day everybody will keep their mouth shut and will not break under pressure no matter what the case is. It wasn't for snitches me and my homeboys would be free and on the outs doing whatever they want when they want those are my thoughts about snitches speakin' on other peoples thangs.

-Young Diablo

From The Beat: The thing is – that whatever you and your homeboys die, the responsibility is on YOU, not on the person who told on you. Why'd you and your homeboys have to break the law to begin with? Don't commit the crime, and no one else can speak or get you time.

One Month at Camp

I've been at camp for a little over a month now, and the time is going by a little bit faster. I finally went home this past weekend, and it made me feel great, because I was free and didn't have to be around all of these wannabe people.

But by me going home that makes me want to do an even better program than I have, because me going home is a better then me locked up in jail.

So I am gonna keep doing me, going home every weekend and be happy

- Jh

From The Beat: When you're home, is there any leftover from the original drama that got you locked up? Are you using that time at home to build up positive habits so you never have to come back to an institution that deprives you of your freedom?

If Everyone Could Vote...

If everyone could vote I would say, shut most jails down.

And vote for majority of our schools back and vote for more high tech guns, also give people in jail a better chance to redeem themselves. The ones who want to and that's serious.

-The Eight Star General

From The Beat: Here's a question – take a look around your neighborhood, and think of the last 10 people you know who were killed in street violence. Each one of them was killed by a gun. The more guns are out there, the more bullets it is flying around the world. Shouldn't the next president be working on trying to get the guns OFF the street?

Kickin' It

To The Beat. What's good, it's your boy Looney just up in camp kickin' it with the homies, and doin' my time, feel me? I'm trying to change my life, got a job, gotta live a family life, but just do more for my son and be there him.

Well homeboys learn from your mistake's and play your cards right. If you come up to camp, we smashin' so be aware and stay solid to the game.

-Looney

From The Beat: The conflict between your old life and your new hopes really shows through in this piece. Is it really possible to be solid to your son AND solid to you're the game at the same time? We've seen people try, but it turns out it's not so easy to be true to both.

How I Feel

(Attention: I have a new name. I used to be Lil' TF, Lil' TI, Lil' Mac)

I'm tired of this camp shhh,

I can't wait to get out so I could buy me a whip.

I'm trying to stack chips,

I'm gon' get all I can get back to the block

They gone be like damn, he the man,

I got to be all that I can

Like my name the Navy

Me and my ninjas we all go crazy

And they say we hella shady 'cause we all get down,

If you didn't know then you better ask around

A-S-A-P you know what that spell

ASAP, Free my ninjas fast'cause most of us in jail
RIP Jae, Doobee, Stevie, Lil' D and all my fallen ninjas.

-Lil' T the Freestyle King

From The Beat: Like you said "be all you can be" and you don't need to do all that dirt and try and run the block... A true King looks for more power than what you get from being a corner soldier. You chose the name – now live up to it!

Big Head Blues

The majority of people that are locked up are very talented and very good at writing

Got to be alert because of too much fighting you got talent

But are not useful got to watch before 21 get that 44
Now I can' say no more because of staff and others in the system

Are trippin' it don't matter because I'm dippin'
Leaving this camp tramp and never come back they call me "big head"

size of the world girls on me like bees on honey.

-Big Head

From The Beat: The day you decide to use that Big Head of yours for a 100 percent positive lifestyle is the day you could start your own personal revolution. We hope that you mean it – no coming back to camp, no coming back to the system – unless it's to change it.

Broadened Up Mindframe

I feel very happy that I haven't got shot. To me that's a great achievement in my life, because The type of life I was living I could have caught some lead. Many people I hang with everyday have gotten shot multiple of times I've been shot at plenty of times so I feel lucky. One achievement is I survived another day everyday I survive I think of that as an achievement.

I plan to achieve a lot of things but now all of my plans are postponed until I gain my freedom back. Positive things I feel I haven't achieved yet, so that's my vision to get a job, and own a house. When I get out I feel I have something to prove to myself, my family, and the world, that is to be successful. I want to live prosperous and retire from my thug way although the game has been good to me. My decisions have locked me up physically but not mentally.

My mind frame has broadened up. I'm blessed to go home, and be alive, so why take a chance on my life again? It's time to start new.

-Mini

From The Beat: There are certain things you can't control - which is if you live in a neighborhood where there are gunshots. But on the other hand, there's a lot you can control too, right? Like you said, part of the problem is the life you were living. And so long as we see you eating single service Santa Rita dinners and waiting on a system worker for fresh air, we don't believe that the game has been good to you. But you know this already, as you show in your last line.

Blood Sweat and Tears

Blood sweat tears is all I shed

And the reason I do it is for the bread

I am going to keep getting it until the day I am dead.

But when that day comes

I hope it's not 'cause a '45 to the head

But it's so hard

Because I am having dreams 'bout the feds

It's ok though 'cause when I wake I am still in bed.

-Suwoo

From The Beat: This poem gives us the chills. Those nightmares are real out there on the streets, and you deserve so much better. What about trying to find OTHER ways to earn the bread?

Proud Of All My Achievements

I am proud of all my achievements, like when I was playing for my basketball team and we won games. I felt like I achieved something.

And when I got good grades and brought them home to my family, I felt like I achieved something to see them happy. Also they gave me money and stuff for my grades I felt good after that.

Recently when my unit was playing in the winning game against another unit, and it was our ball. We was down by one point and I was open. They passed me the ball at the three-point line and I was wide open. I thought about it, and then let it fly, and it was all net. We won and went to the next round and got out on that day.

My greatest achievement to me was when I got my GED. My mom was happy and the rest of my family.

Also my PO was so glad that she was letting me off probation. Then I went to jail one day before I was supposed to get off. I still got off, but I'm still in here.

-Baby T

From The Beat: It feels good - that triumph, knowing the people around you are proud of you, knowing you've done something difficult, knowing that you've helped a group of people move forward. Moments like that are what make life worth living, we hope you strive to have many more of them! Are you going to keep playing ball on the outs? Is there a team at your high school you could try out for?

She Needs A Hug

I'm sitting in my room worried about me and you
being in this place got me missing yo' face

Damn I can't wait for us to be in the same space
But don't trip we'll be together soon faster than you think.

She needs a hug

I sit back and reminisce 'bout all the times we spent together

From wake-up to break-up

And I'm still picking up j-cats' games

'Cause they get at you,

But you still stay true it's always me and you

She needs a hug

I ain't no angel but I got one on my side

Which is you ...so you know The Kid stay true,

Even though your man is thuggin'

That don't mean he don't like to make and see you smile

'Cause with that I could go a million miles

She needs a hug

She say she love me

Which I feel we be so close, feelings go crazy

Which means me too and I'm important

Most to the one who care I ain't tripping

'Cause just like everybody else

I know what it is so just know

We love each other

I hope the same I'll see you soon

Till then she needs me love and

She needs a hug

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: "I ain't no angel but I got one on my side." One of our favorite lines we've heard from you yet - maybe the angels see something in you worth saving and fighting for. Can you do that - and can you love this girl the way she deserves to be love if you don't commit to living your life legit?

RIP Doodie

My ninja. I miss my ninja. He's been gone for about five months. He first came to jail in February of 2007 for possession of a firearm. Me and Doodie was in the same unit, beastin' it on them ninjas.

And then next time I seen my ninja, we was on late-night, posted. Then we went to go kick with my ninja, and Doodie and another ninja had a fight.

Then two weeks later my ninja was dead, and I was stressed then it was on after that. I miss you bra.

-Momo

From The Beat: It's a tragedy that you lost him. Also a tragedy that the loss put you back in jail and back "on one." But this pain won't be for nothing, if you can learn from it, and maybe even make a vow that you will change and live a good life, because you can. How about if you start by quitting the late nights?

With All My Heart

I really miss my girlfriend. I miss the way she used to talk me into buying her stuff and giving her money. I love her with all my heart.

I swear I'll take a bullet to the backside for her. I miss her dearly. And I dream about her beautiful face every night even though she's a tad bit overweight and has several acne. I just make believe they're freckles.

And I tell her she's beautiful every chance I get. I love you Amanda... Peace Beat

-Shantay

From The Beat: When you truly love someone, you see and feel her inner beauty. Do you think this is true love, the kind that inspires you BOTH to make yourselves better people?

Achievements: Real Talk.

I want to achieve my goals I set for 2008 and while I was in here (J.J.C).

I been locked up since March 29th, 2007 and I set goals up for my future. Im looking forwards to graduate and get my diploma but so far it ain't looking too good I just got my transcripts and I only got 63 credits. I'm suppose to graduate next year, '09. I'm gonna try and get my credits up 'cause all I need is 200 credits to graduate.

My back up plan is to get my GED. I'm also looking forward to help my parents out and get a job 'cause I'm 16 going to be 17 yrs old and I think I should be taking care of them now.

I want to play football and go to college. I'm going for criminal justice to be a staff over here or be a PO, 'cause I want to help the next generation out with a better future. Real talk. That's about it Beat, I'm ghost...

-Tongan

From The Beat: These goals are solid, achievable, and maybe even just around the corner. Just remember that the best way to "take care" of our parents is to take care of yourself ... get a job, avoid keeping them up at night with worry, make it so they don't have to pay anymore restitution, and mostly, be happy and proud of yourself. What will you have to ditch in your life in order to start working on these goals for real?

So Tired

What's up Beat? This is Lil Chuy still in jail stuck like Joe.

I really want to go home because I'm tired of coming back to jail.

I need to go make some money, because I am tired of looking at the same staff and the same ninjas.

I'm so tired of wearing the same pants for a week,

So tired that I can't talk to my main.

Staff always thinking that they seen us

They got me messed up.

So tired.

-Lil' Chuy

From The Beat: We're glad you're so tired, because hopefully it will make you tired of the life you were living on the outs. We hope you remember exactly how you felt when you wrote this, so that you get out of the deathgame for good!

Ma Letter To God

Dear Heavenly Father,

I'm here praying to you today and every day. Praying for you to watch over my family, friends, and staff. I thank you for watching over me and my younger siblings. I thank you for sending good people my way to help and watch over me. I pray for my parents and grandparents to be safe and live longer and that they forgive me for my sins and you forgive them for theirs.

I pray my cousin Shay gets out and stays out.

I pray for people to stop getting into it.

I pray for my Auntie & Uncle. I pray that you soften the judges & PO's & DA's hearts

I pray that I go home

I pray that you know Jesus Christ has a better plan for me. In Jesus's name I pray, Amen.

Oh and I also pray for the children and my husband and parents-in-law.

I really pray for my lil' cousins and Pastor Allen for helping me. Amen.

-Keys

From The Beat: We can see that you really wrote this from the heart, and we hope that these prayers reach the right ears. Of course the most important ears are your own, in the sense that as you know, you must spend each day making these prayers mean something by doing your best to be good to others, and to yourself. Can you give us an example of a moment when you've lived the way you know you wanted to?

Too Comfortable

Lately I've been thinking bout goin' home. I've been stressing that it's taken too long for them to release me. I've been waiting two months and it's been like I got comfortable being here.

Then it hit me that I want to need to go home.

-Phillbert

From The Beat: You need to get home, and stay home, because like you said, once people get too comfortable in here, that's when they're really in danger. Do you think this happens to a lot of people?

Ten Years From Now

I just want to get my life straight in this world, even though I keep messing up in my life. I know I'm going to be someone later on.

People keep talking and running their mouths but I'm tired of doing dirt in these streets, and now I want to keep my head up and be someone in the future. Because without education I ain't going to be nobody. I feel like a sucka every time I get home, because I know my parents know that I'm good, and they think that I'm doing good in my life but now is another story for me. I just want to get out and just be someone in my life and change for my parents, and me, and all my family.

-Sergio

From The Beat: You just took the first step - you know what you want, and you know why, deep down in your heart. The next step is the "how." How are you going to make these changes. Are there people you need to stop hanging out with? Spots you need to avoid? Is it time to get a job, or is it time to pick up on a sport you left behind? If you want to do better in school, do you need to go to a teacher and demand a tutor? What else would help you succeed?

When I Get Out

When I get out I'm 'bout to change some of my ways (like my attitude), because I don't want to come back to the hall.

And I also wanna change my ways so I can be with my family, because I haven't been with them in like two years. This is why I wanna change my ways.

-Lil' O

From The Beat: It starts with that feeling, deep in your heart, that you want something better. You took that first step by having that feeling. Now the next step is to really start doing things differently. What are some of the "ways" you need to change? And what new "ways" will you substitute for the old ones?

Gold Years Of Love

Oh Lord, I think the golden years have seen my very best,

For all throughout my youthful life I was put through many tests.

My heart now has a yearning as it never had before
To see your hand in everything and to want you more and more.

Why did I have to wait so long to walk the narrow road
And to be so filled with love for you that I fear I might explode?

Oh lord, your love is awesome, it lifts me to a higher plane.

Please let me live these golden years giving praise to your holy name.

-Sydney

From The Beat: You ask a good question in this lovely poem of praise - which is why do you think it's NOW that you have had a change in your feelings about faith? Is it because you are locked up? Or because of an individual person who inspires you? Is it because you're in jail? The reason we ask is that this positive feeling is something you want to hold on to right? So how will you keep it in your mind when temptations come your way?

This Case

I'm in here on a pistol case,
And if it would have been me driving
It would've been a high-speed chase,
Now the D-A is in my lawyer's face like a can of mace.
Not tryin' to give a homie any space.
I just want to be on the block, in the city, you feel me.
I'ma stay on the top of my game, fahgit the fame,
don't make myself hot.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: There's only one way to stay on top of your game and that's to quit playing. Because right now, that game is on top of you.. If you'd had a high speed chase, you might have gotten yourself - or another person - killed. And it would have been a murder charge! So why don't you take this experience as a real chance at a better life?

My Future

I wanna go to SF State. The way I'm going to do that is get my GED then go to Junior College for two years. Then go to SF State.

I'm proud of graduating from Junior High.

-The Eight Star General!

From The Beat: How did it feel when you were walking that stage, getting ready to pick up your JH diploma? Proud, right? Like you were becoming a success in life? Multiply that feeling times 10, and that's how you'll feel when you get your GED. Then multiply it times 100, and then that's how you'll feel when you get yourself in college. Keep us posted!

Why I Want Obama To Be President

Me I think Obama should become president because I know he gon' change things in our community.

The things that need to change is the violence in Oakland, and things out the whole world because it would help people be positive and successful in the world. He would make people live up to their goals and what they want to become in life.

If I could have my opinion I would make more recreation programs and the communities have lots of after school programs and things of that nature.

That's why I think Obama should be president.

-Li'l T

From The Beat: No matter who wins, it's about time we get a president who made the youth and schooling a top priority. But the responsibility is also on you, right? Because if those rec centers get built, will you go to them? Would you work at one, watching the little kids? Would you keep the violence out of it? If there were afterschool programs, would you go?

If Everyone Could Vote: A Different World

If everyone could vote, the "Three Strikes" law would not be passed, because convicted felons would vote against it.

If they mess up twice and then try and change their life, and get caught runnin' a stop sign they could get life! And the death penalty would not be around either, because nobody wants to die.

Stanley Tookie Williams would still be alive today. The immigration laws would be different because, immigrants come for a fresh start and they would want to stay.

And the war would be more brutal because the families would want the women or men back, so they may just kill everybody so they can come home.

-Mitchell

From The Beat: We were with you on this terrific piece right up to the end, because one thing that might happen is that if people could vote, they'd say "Hey we don't want to kill or die for a war that isn't about us," and maybe it wouldn't be more killing, it would actually be less. Like you say, nobody wants to die.

I Miss My Family

What's up with it Beat? I'm here to talk about my family. Man, I miss my family. I been locked up in Juvenile Hall for almost 3 month and I'm stressing really hard right now, because I ain't with my family and my two little sisters.

The other reason why I miss my family is because when my mom, step dad, and two little sisters come visit me I cant even get to hug my mom or nothing I got non-contact visits I gotta see my parents behind the glass.

The only thing I'm really mad about is that I don't get to see my big sister that much I only see her like three time at court and I didn't get a chance to see my whole family.

-Baby Al

From The Beat: Man, you need to get back home to the people you love, soon. They need you, and you need them. Have you sat down with them to make a plan for how you will make sure you don't have to come back to the system again?

Escape from Reality

When I make love I inhale it in my lungs
My true love is the potency of the weed I add to my blunt
I swear I'm in love with this nerve calmer
I wake up and that's my breakfast

I rarely need to eat

I just puff and light to wake from my sleep

My girl be jumpin' on me

Tryna make me put her as my number one love

But I tell her hold on, and spark another blunt

This the way I escape from reality and blind my rough thoughts

I like to roll up puff and listen to my heart honestly

I blow me eight sacks a day not caring about cancer

I'm just focused on taking my thoughts to a better place

I'm a bomb walking exploding with the smell of

marijuana

When I'm walking through the place folks ask me "ay, you got it?"

I say "naw I ain't the one to ask to cop you a dose
You gotta find some other youngsta 'cause I don't sell, I smoke"

Real big, you see my blunts

My ninja real big

And don't let me start on the Hennessy Privilege...

-Li'l Young the Rebel

From the Beat: You love a woman that don't love you back/She'll break you and fake you put YOU on the track/She takes your blood like a vampire/She keeps you numb so you don't feel the pain/A whole world to lose, and nothin' to gain/Your mind would be too clear if you keep talkin'/So this fake woman of yours got you sleepwalkin'/Right to the grave/Or the six by eight/Find a better girl, before it's too late!

Voting Equals Change

If everyone could vote, things will be better, because thing will change. Like some laws 'cause most black males paperwork and they do not have the rights to votes.

If everybody could vote it will be a lot of different laws and people will have all chance to do something good, and help out people that can't vote. They would like to see change in the laws.

-Vernell

From The Beat: One of the things that's true is that if every member of the black community voted, the black community would be much more powerful in American politics. Right now, there's lots of politicians who don't even pay attention to what happens in the ghetto, because they know people in the ghetto won't vote or effect whether or not they get re-elected. Crazy, right?

If I Ruled The World

If I ruled the world it would be no little kids hungry
Or nobody robbing or killing for money
And everybody would be free to do whatever
They like if I ruled the world I would take form the rich
and give to the poor
They don't know how it feel to have your lights turned
out
They don't know how living in poverty could make a
young man sell drugs
We ain't made into we was born to be thugs
I would not let ladies have abortions
'Cause they killing an innocent life that never did
anything
And I would make sure homeless people had a place to
stay.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: If you ruled the world then the world would be all good. But one person can't rule the world. There are billions of people in this world. How can one person rule the world and make it good? Why can't we all rule the world by just being positive all on our own? If everyone stopped the negativity and started doing positive we would all see some kind of change in this world.

A Changed Person

My goal I want to achieve is to get out of Juvenile Hall and go home and be good with my parents.

I want to show them that I am a wonderful kid that they have. I wanna show my parents that I can go to school and graduate from High School.

I don't want my parents to think that they have raised a bad kid and that's why I'm gonna be super good for them and never come to Juvenile Hall.

My second goal is to finish my probation and get over with it. If I get placed on Home Supervision I am gonna follow all the rules and regulations. After I get out of Juvenile Hall I really want to change my life over I want to be a changed person.

-Avikash

From The Beat: Seems like you don't need to change who you are, just some of the things you do - and then you won't be becoming a new person, you'll just return to being the old good person that your parents love so much. Peace!

365 Days A Year I'm Writing

365 days I'm writing
This is one of the things in my life that is exciting
I write and I really do think I am the best
They good but forget about the rest
I can write about any topic
Y'all writings is a walk in the park
Mine is a trip to the tropics
If yo' writings ain't real you should really stop it
I'm like a gun after you cock it
5, 4, 3, 2, 1 then I blast off like a rocket
I'm the first like Willie Mays
I'm like a full-grown lion released from his cage
And I swing page to page
Call me a gorilla on paper
Write so much all I see is the blue lines
Try to top me lil' dude stop trying
I'm the greatest no denying it.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: Stay writing and get anything you feel like getting off your chest. You are a great writer you should really use your skill to your advantage. You can get paid serious bread if you know what you're doing.

They Don't Care

If you like reading fake stuff don't read this yeah this
Young Mari
And I'm about to talk about this system
They try to take us away from our family
So easily they don't know how it feels to have they kids
sent off to who knows where
I been here almost five months and my PO only talked to
me three times
They just lock us up and forget about us like we're
animals
And they wonder why we're mad
Most of the time 'cause we come here for all kinda
things
And we feel we should get another chance to make it
right
They send us to the Y
To get rid of us for a few years
They don't care about helping us
They just say let's keep them locked up
Makes our jobs easier
Until next time stay strong.

-Young Mari

From The Beat: You're right they don't care. At the end of the day they are just there to collect their paycheck. It's not fair that they send people off to institutions like CYA and expect them to change. But on the other hand a lot of people get second chances. Some people get 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, chances. And they always want more chances, but go back to doing the same thing. If you were given a chance what would you do with it?

Mad

I came to Juvenile Hall on The 1st and I'm mad.

-Kenyon

From The Beat: We hope you stay mad - mad enough to promise yourself that you will never, ever put yourself in a lockdown situation again. Can you be that mad?

My Life

What's up Beat, this Chikillo well I don't feel no topics but I'm gonna write about my life. Well, once I was with my homeboys kicking it, smoking with some girls, having fun. It was like 12am, and then we went to buy some beers.

When I got out of my house, there were like five people waiting for us, but I didn't know who they were, and then they just start to shoot at us.

So me and my homeboys started running through somebody's property then they call the police on us. We started running to different places and jumping fences so we wouldn't get caught, but then I called my cousin to pick me up and take me home.

When I just got home and start thinking about what I had done and my mom and dad was hella mad when I got home because it was hella late but they were mad only for two days and then they forgot about it.

I couldn't take the whole thing out of my mind because it was like a bad and good day because I was with the homeboys and homegirls kicking it and it was a bad day 'cause I got shot at.

Well Beat I'm out.

-Juan

From The Beat: You have been through and seen so much that honestly we think "My Life" is the best topic you could pick. We see more bad day than good day in this story, because we feel like it could happen again. We know you love your friends, but by being part of that lifestyle, you make yourself a human target - either for the police or for the bullets... and we feel like your parents did - they weren't "mad" at you, they were genuinely scared for you. Are you scared for yourself?

Barack Obama

I think Barack Obama would be a good president for us because the people in the war in Iraq have families worried about them and he said he will pull as many as he can out.

Another reason I think he would be a good president is because he cares about the needs in the U.S like better schools, job, and other things like cleaning our community. I think Barack Obama is the most powerful politician, and he should be elected president of the U.S

-Jama

From The Beat: Maybe when you get out of jail you should think about a future in politics too, because it sounds like you really think about the issues. Maybe one day you could follow in his footsteps?

Voting For President

I've heard that Hilary Clinton is going to do things to help Oakland directly.

But I think Barack Obama is the best candidate for president. Not because he is black, but because he talks about things that will help the morale of the country, like pull the U.S troops out of the Middle East, which is a highly dramatic situation at this period of time.

-Greg

From The Beat: Thanks for your thoughts on this... do you personally have family members or loved ones in the military or in Iraq? When you are old enough to vote, do you intend to register? Do you think your vote matters?

Nothing Changes

I don't believe -- I'm just keeping it real -- that anything is gonna change, because people are just going to keep shooting each other. Somebody's gonna let their ego get bigger then their life.

Shhhh, what they gonna do? Bring the army?

We got guns and shhh that the army got.

But I do want to see what's going to happen with the president!!

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: It's a good thing you did end on a note of hope, because we got worried there. If the young people don't believe they have a better future, how will they ever get there?

What Up!

It's me again, still in this place waiting for placement. My PO was trying to play me and have me cut my hair but it ain't gone happen. I am still shaken. I can't wait to get some cuttie 'cause I miss a female's touch and kiss.

-Long Hair

From The Beat: Well we hope that you don't have to wait too much longer to go to placement. We wish you the best of luck. We also hope that you don't have to come back to anymore facilities so you won't have to miss a female's touch for too long ever again.

My Plan

I plan to go to school and do better on my schoolwork and get better grades. I plan on doing better in life, in general.

I plan on getting out of here and not coming back because it is not fun in here. It's a waste of time and I can't wait until I get out. The food is nasty the shower is too hot! People don't listen I can't wait I can't wait.

-Pancho Villa

From The Beat: People don't listen you gotta listen. When you get out don't come back. Next time you think about doing things that's gonna bring you here think about the nasty food, and the short hot showers you're gonna get.

Stuck In The Game

A pretty woman once asked me if my life I would change

But as I looked into her eyes began feeling strange
I said that change would be good but I'm stuck in the game

And when I try to do different I end up doing the same

What I'm livin' is real there aint no riddles or jokes

One minute I could be smoking the next I could be smoked

I stay surrounded by rivals up in the streets and in jail

So I stay on my toes loving this life up in hell

And I ain't running from no one unless they bust my head

I'll also run from the cops and more than less from the feds

At times I feel paranoid like I'm alone in this world

But then I look at my fam', my boys, my gun, and my girl

So I ain't trippin' off nothin' 'cause I got all that I need

All I'm missing is freedom and a gram of some weed

And I'm a true 49er just like Joe Montana

You can catch me on the block rocking my bandana

-Gumby

From The Beat: Everything that you say you need is just gonna bring you right back to jail. You need your gun for what? You want your freedom so bad but when you get out all you're gonna do is do things that's gonna bring you back. So how can somebody want their freedom so bad only to go back to doing things that jeopardize their freedom? What do you want your freedom for?

Vote, My Thoughts

I think everyone in the United States should be able to vote. I only think it's fair for everyone in the U.S to vote because anything that happens effect those people that didn't vote. I think the age limit for voting should be sixteen, because by that age kids should be maturing and have a feel of what's going on. I also think people in prison should vote because they are being affected.

-Philosopher

From The Beat: You're right but the system isn't set up like that. What can you do to change it? How can you go about letting the officials that the community elects into office, know that we need to change the age for voting. Why do you get tried as adults but you can't even vote or buy cigarettes. And how can you prove that people start maturing at age sixteen.

High Beams

Once there was a girl name Jessica.

She was driving down a dark deserted road, except for a car that Jessica was driving. And she looked in her mirror and she seen the truck, so she speed up and then she seen bright lights come on from the back where the truck was.

She realized that it was his high beams. So she signaled him to pass her, but he stayed behind her and she kept driving. He hit his high beams again, so she speeded up until she arrived at her house, and she ran in and told her Dad to call the cops.

He did and they both went outside and the truck was pulling up and her dad pulled out a shotgun and the guy jumped of his truck right when the cops pulled up. The cops arrested him and he said "hold on, look in the back of her car." So they open the trunk and there was a man in the trunk that had a knife in his hand.

-Desmond

From The Beat: Man, this is a great story - where did you first hear it, and what did it teach you about life, and about what we should or shouldn't fear? Have you ever been in a situation where you were afraid of the very thing that was trying to save you?

Those Fools Aggravated Me

A big achievement for me was leaving ROP (a group home). It's a nine-month program, but I was there for 16 months due to the fact that I was getting into fights, like every other week. Most of the fights had to do with what I hold it down for. Me and my homeboys were outnumbered, but that didn't matter 'cause we kept it organized and went way harder than most them fools.

That's not even the problem. The problem was the staff trying to get over on us. Every time I was starting to do good, the staff would do something to aggravate me. So I had to leave on my own will.

-Mongo

From The Beat: So, help us understand how most of "them" were fools, but you're the one who had to do 16 months in a nine-month program. It sure makes us wonder about that word, "fool..." Here's something you may not have learned yet, but we've been around long enough to know that the aggravation the staff caused you will always be there, whether it's "the staff," "teachers," "the system," colleagues at a job, your boss, your family, etc. One critical part of growing up is learning how to deal with aggravation like that without hurting your own cause and your own future.

I'm Going To Do Better

My achievements are to go home because I don't want to be in here. I want to be home with my family where I belong, not in this trap place. My achievements are to get a 2.50 or higher. Also to do better than I'm supposed to.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Even though this is short, we admire you for wanting to achieve something more in your life. You're right, you don't belong in this place. So, when you get out, make sure you never come back!

I Am What I Am!

I am what I am. I do good and bad things. I like to do things other people don't like to, like playing basketball a lot. I am what I am! I did bad things that I can't explain. I could only change the future but not the past. You either like me or hate me. I am what I am!

-Dirty D

From The Beat: Why do we either have to like or hate you? Can't we like some things about you, but not other things? If you cannot explain the "bad things" you have done, how can you change the future? Do you want to change your future? Why? How? Are you a good basketball player?

When I Get Out

What's good with The Beat? This that ninja Na-Na writin' about when I touch back down on the black. Man, my motto is "money" and more.

But when I get out, I'm 'bout to go get with a female and do my thing until it's time for your boy to go get that cake. That's how we do on my side of town, you dig.

But you know, when I get out, I'm about to try to achieve one goal and that is go to school. But y'all know I'm gone still be down for my dead homies. "We all we got."

-Na-Na

From The Beat: As we have told you countless times, we're not going to let you use The Beat to threaten anyone, so we had to take out everything in you your motto following the word "money" and replace it with the one word, "more." If you can't respect us enough to follow that simple rule, then why do you get so angry when we take out clichés like, "We all we got?" A cliché is a phrase or sentence that is not original, that everybody else uses, that doesn't come from your own mind, that is without much meaning beyond the fact that it's repeated and repeated. (Is American "the land of the free and the home of the brave" just because everyone says it is?) And since The Beat is about your original thinking and not someone else's, we are tired of reading clichés. Still, because you think it's disrespectful of us to take out that phrase, we didn't take it out. Now, can you please give us an equal measure of respect.

Messin' With Your Block

One day I wish I would survive the streets

Gang related people firin' they heat

And hangin' on the street claimin' yo' block or shakin'

Yo' dread locks stay wit' yo' pops and you will see a lot

of people smokin' rocks

Gettin' high doing a lot of stuff

Messin' with yo' block

-Gary

From The Beat: You've described your block, but not your own contribution to what goes on there. Are you part of the mess, or do you try to make things better? How?

We'll Make Love

Roses are true

Violets are too

You break my heart

But I still love you

I know I'm not legal

Not just yet

I watch at work

And how you work them sweats

Give me two more years

And we'll make love

Until, the end of time

But until, then keep me in mind

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: We had to change the first two lines of your poem slightly (because of our rules about colors), but other than that, it's just as you wrote it.

Living To Die

What's up Beat? This your boy, Davey-D. But yeah, I'ma tell y'all some real shhh. Man, when you out there on yo' block, do you know that we are "living to die?" You think that y'all won't be touched because the 'hood you claim and the ninjas you roll with. Just because you think that, y'all be having guns and y'all be shooting people. But remember this, and don't forget who you heard this from: We are living to die.

I know a lot of people that were living good lives, taking care of they family, and they ended up getting killed for some dumb shhh. So RIP to all my loved ones that we lost in the struggle.

-Davey-D

From The Beat: We're trying to understand exactly what you mean, DD, but we're having some difficulty. If you mean that young people are dying because children have guns, then we can understand that. And if you're saying that good people get killed, too, we also can understand that. But what we can't understand is what you mean by, "We're living to die." The truth is, we all must die, whether we live good lives or bad lives, whether we're rich or poor, educated or not. It's how we live that counts. Is that what you meant to say?

My Lady

Two months and one more year to go up in this box with three walls around my dreams and mind. 24/7 missing that one lady that make my day and make me smiley. That's my wifey, my baby, my lady, my pretty lady. Missing her hips, her way to show me that I'm somebody in this life, fo' show...

Ten months together, with me in my life. Been with me in the ups and downs. Thank you, baby.

-Shadow

From The Beat: You're very lucky to have a girl like this in your life. But since you do have someone so special, why would you give all that up for this box that you hate so much? If you want to be with her, what you were doing obviously isn't working for you...

Change

A lot of people can achieve in a lot of stuff. I need to achieve in my life to change my ways around people. But I need to succeed to turn my life around and stay out of juvenile halls, stay with my family, my three sisters and my little brother.

Right now thinkin' that I ain't never gone succeed in life and stuff, so I need to achieve in a lot of things.

-Gary

From The Beat: What are the "ways" you need to change around people? How are you working on achieving these changes? If you think you won't succeed, that is a real handicap to moving forward. In other words, your attitude toward what you can do (and what you can't do) may be the most important thing you need to change in order to achieve what you want to achieve in life. We hope you keep working on these things, because your sisters and brother need you just as much as you need them.

Going All Out

What's good with The Beat? This your boy V chillin' in the halls, trying to get back to the block.

Man, all this shhh is bullshhh, having me to wait for Glen Mills and shhh to come get me. I ain't trippin' though, 'cause all I need to know is that I'm getting out. Soon as I touchdown, I'm going all out, you dig. And at the same time I'ma be on my shhh.

This to all, keep y'all heads up, and don't let your guards down at all times. Oh yeah, remember we do time, time don't do us, you dig.

-V

From The Beat: Instead of getting so worked up waiting for Glen Mills, we wish you were more focused on what you might be able to learn there that would make staying out of lock-ups more likely. Your focus on getting back to the block hasn't been working very well for you (or you wouldn't be here answering to a bunch of strangers). If you think you already know everything you need to know, then you have a lot of growing to do, since — even at our age — we know we'll never know all that we'd like to know. Can you do us a favor? Can you spend some time thinking about exactly what you mean when you say you're not letting time do you, and then write a piece telling us how you are doing time rather than the other way around?

Look Out For Next Week

I'm a achiever succeeding in doing or gaining something with effort. Never failing, never giving up. And don't hate for you get beat up. I don't really got a lot to say but look out for next week.

-Boi Boi

From The Beat: Well, we agree that you don't have a lot to say, so we'll hold you to your promise of more next week. Never giving up is an achievement, but never failing is outside of human experience. We ALL fail, from time to time, which is why never giving up is so important.

Vote For President

If I could vote for President, I would vote for myself, because I would make all laws fair. For example, I will make all men equal and there will be no more segregation. Also, there will be drugs legal. Furthermore, there will be guns allowed. Then I would train better police to get criminals and raise more funds. I would get more money for the poor and make the homeless a house. I will be a sick President.

-Lil' A

From The Beat: If you could accomplish just getting more money for the poor and building homes for the homeless, we would vote for you too! But where would you get the money to do these things? Why would you want to make guns legal? (In fact, guns are already legal. It's in the Constitution, 2nd Amendment.) Do you plan to register to vote when you turn 18? You might be surprised to learn that, under our system, you can vote for yourself. You can vote in the name of anyone you like — but only if you're registered to vote.

If I Was President

If I was President, I will let weed be legal and dope selling all day long. I will fire all the white police and ship them to Mississippi and leave the black police. And I will build a gun shop with every gun they make, and make my 'hood rich and bring my dead homies to life, and eliminate the KKK.

-Mandingo

From The Beat: We took out your promises of violence if you became President. When you write that you would "bring your dead homies back," that tells us (and everyone reading) that you are not serious. There is a time to play. There is a time to act like an adult. This piece tells us that you're still waiting for that time to come...

Getting My GED

A big achievement for me would be getting out of juvy and getting my GED. That would be a big achievement for me because it would be a huge step for me in changing my life around.

-J

From The Beat: We want to encourage you to get your GED, because that would be a great achievement. But we also want to caution you that taking the lazy way out (writing two sentences in an hour workshop can only be described as lazy), is not a good sign for achieving your goal. Everything in life worth achieving takes effort. Time for you to put some effort into it.

Obama Over Bush

I would vote for Barack Obama because he will be a better President than Bush ever was because he will stop the war in Iraq and help American citizens with their needs in life.

-Ben

From The Beat: Even though this is only one sentence, we're still putting it in The Beat because it shows you are thinking. But thinking requires more details, more explanation, more examples. Don't cheat us (and yourself) by taking the lazy way. We like your reasons for thinking that Obama will be a better President than Bush, but Bush cannot be President again. So, the choice now is between Obama and Hillary Clinton. Since she also has said she will stop the war in Iraq and help Americans with their needs, why do you like Obama better than Clinton? Those are the details we would like to read.

What I'd Do As President

If I became President, weed will be legal and dope will be legal until 5:00 in the morning. All the white police will be fired, an' all the brothers we be rich.

If I was President, I will eliminate the KKK forever. And if I was President, I will go to New Orleans and put the whole city back and give New Orleans \$1,000,000,000,000,000 million dollars, so they could love yo' boy, Fat Pat.

-Fat Pat

From The Beat: Of course the people of New Orleans would love you if you gave them so much money, but where would that money come from? As for firing all the white cops, is that because you believe black and brown cops are on the up-and-up and only white cops do dirt?

Voting For Anyone

If I had a chance to vote for anyone in the world, I would vote for a staff here in juvy hall. He talks to me, talks to all, and he talks some real shhh... and I listen. But when I'm on the outs, I forget. But I will remember this time because I don't want to come back and I'm going to listen more, so I would vote for Mr. Gibson. Peace.

-Lil' Sneaky

From The Beat: This is a very nice tribute to Mr. Gibson. Maybe the job he is doing as a counselor is even more important than what he could do as President. We're glad you're listening to him and that what he says is helping you.

Another Homie Dead

What's up with The Beat? You know who this is, it's Tray. Man, you ninjas know me. Y'all know how I get down. I'ma talk about hard times when yo' homies start dying and you can't do nothing about it. I'm about to do a long time.

I'ma talk to y'all about my homie. Last night my big homie got shot and died at the hospital.

-Tray

From The Beat: First, we can't let you use the name you chose for yourself because of the number. Second, you have enough time to write something much more meaningful than this! We want you to think about the "long time" you're about to do, and the wish that you could "do something" about your dead homies. We know what that something is, but we wonder if you have connected the dots to see the relationship between what you want to do and what you have to do ("a long time"). What else does "hard times" mean to you besides friends dying on the streets?

The Ranch Is Boring

This is Lil' Morro, chillin' at LCR. Being here in jail is not fun, is bore, 'cause you got nobody and your family doin' good. Here in jail got nasty food, short ass phone calls. We ain't got no McDonald's. All we got is ugly deers, ugly turkeys, cows and ugly goats.

-Lil' Morro

From The Beat: Nobody wants to be bored, but what would encourage you more to stay out of any mess, and stay free when you're home again? Remember, jail/the ranch is not a resort. We challenge you to mature up and handle your business like a young man!

Getting Out And Staying Out

Something I want to achieve is getting my fam bam out the 'hood and buy my mom a house. That's something I want to achieve in the next four years or five years. My life is not easy right now, but I'm trying hard to get on the right track. That's one thing I'm go achieve also — getting out and staying out of this place.

-Acie

From The Beat: We truly hope you achieve your goal of staying out of here once you touch down. We're sure you mom would like a new house, but we're also sure she wants you home whether her home is new or old. That four-five year time limit you've set for yourself may not be realistic if you want to avoid coming to another place like this. Buying a house usually takes years of saving. But it is definitely something you can achieve, if you do it the right way. We hope you do.

Get Your Plan Ready For When You're Out

What's up wit' The Beat? This is yo' boy, Enano, just handling business, trying to knock out this time I got left at the Ranch. But for all the people that are at the halls or 'bout to go to a grouper (group home), y'all better have a plan on what y'all 'bout to do. It will be better to finish yo' time, but if you're going to go out there and still do this same stuff, y'all 'bout to come back to the halls, best believe it. And stop telling yourself that you're not coming back to the halls. If you still doin' the same stuff, you're coming back.

If you're a street souljah, stay in the game if that's yo' choice. If the streets were made for you, let it be, 'cause ain't no one gonna stop you. We live this street life for a reason, but if you ain't got no reason, stay out the game. Let the souljahs fight this war in 'Frisco. This is yo' boy, Enano, and I'm out.

-Enano

From The Beat: What would you consider valid reasons for anyone to stay in the streets and what would be invalid ones? Does each man or woman decide for him/herself whether s/he should be and remain a soldier for life? How does someone drop out of the street life if s/he thinks s/he has had enough and chooses to move on into the world beyond the gang/street life? Do you already know what choice will you make, someday?

Voting Is Stupid

Voting don't really catch my eye because other people my age isn't able to vote for about another two years. When I turn 18, I probably won't take the time out to go register for that stupid shhh. Now that's all I have to say about The Beat.

-Lil' Danny

From The Beat: These little two sentence pieces just won't do for The Beat (and we won't publish such lazy efforts again). Why do you think voting is "stupid shhh"? Just saying it tells us absolutely nothing. Do you complain about the cops? The PD? The judge? The Hall? All those are part of the government that we vote for (or against). Why should anyone care about your complaints if you can't even take the time to register and vote?

My Mom And Dad Sold Drugs

What's up, Beat? It's yo' boy, Menace, just chillin' up here, knockin' it, this baby time out, feel me?

Well, today, I'm gon' be talk about who I am. Well, my name should say it all. I got the name 'cause I started early. I started when I was twelve years old, but I grew up in a drug house. My mom and dad didn't use the drugs, they sold them.

When I was little, my mind was ahead of everybody else's and I already had my mind set on gettin' money the fast way and bangin' with the homies (I was only six years old.)

(The movie) "Blood In, Blood Out" really made me like the gangbanging life. (The movie) "American Me" was weak to me, but anyways, I've been around this environment my whole life. I can't see me anywhere other than the San Francisco Mission District.

-Menace

From The Beat: How did watching your parents sell drugs influence you? What have drugs already done to your family? Where are, how are, your parents now? Did you decide you'd rather do anything else than sell drugs yourself, or have you chosen to also sell them in the streets, too? How do you see yourself being successful as a gangbanger, but somehow avoiding the inevitability of prison or death?

Real Smooth

Man, my love story real coo',

For all the young ladies ma you with a real dude

Young house real smooth

This for The Beat so you suckas better stay coo'

Me and my mammas do what Bonnie and Clyde do

-T-House

From The Beat: One thing Bonnie and Clyde did not do was get themselves locked up...

If I Was President

If everyone could vote, I would be the President. If I was the president I would make sure all my homies would be in the White House blowing big.

I also wouldn't be spending so much money on jails. It wouldn't be no more people sleepin' on the streets. It would be fat shelters for the fiends.

And last but not least, if I was the President, nobody would be getting harrassed by the police. I'm outta here.

-Young President

From The Beat: As you should have guessed, we took out everything you wrote about your 'hood because colors always make us nervous, even if you only meant to convey pride in your 'hood. But once you got serious in this piece, we admire the goals you would hope to achieve if you were President. But where would the money come from to pay for what you want? And why do you think you would be President if everyone could vote? How would you convince people who don't agree with your agenda to vote for you?

The Streets

The Beat Within: Sometimes it seems like no matter what some of your homies, and even you, down at the Ranch write and say about changing your lives when you get off the Ranch, so you won't ever get arrested again and get yourselves locked up again, really your hearts seem to be in the streets. It seems like that as soon as you're off the Ranch, as soon as you're free and back home again, you're headed right back to the streets, right?

Enano: Yeah. It's (the streets) are fun. I ain't gonna lie. I hate to stay home when the streets are (live.)

TBW: It almost seems like all of you sort of think the rest of your lives are dull, that you're bored at home, at school, that the real action, the drama, even the real fun for all of you is in the streets. Even though the lure of the streets includes the all the danger, the violence, but still, its really the fun of the streets that calls so many of you back there, regardless of how much you know those streets sabotage your lives, your freedom, your future, is that right?

E: Yeah.

TBW: But you already know how the streets can get you involved in all kinds of things that are illegal, that if you get caught and are arrested again, it's right back to juvy, now the Ranch, or worse. So why don't you, can't you, stay out of the streets?

E: 'Cause they're fun.

TBW: Okay, why don't you describe for The Beat what the streets are like for you? What about them is so much fun?

E: I just like to watch people walking by. I watch out for trouble—fighting, getting jumped, shootings, girls try to come and chill with us, but I tell them to leave.

TBW: What about the rest of your life? Whether it's as much fun as the streets are for you or not, what's it like? What's your family up to? Do you go to school? Do you have a job? Do you have a career you'd like to pursue? Or do you intend to stay in the streets forever, even when you become an old man?

E: I don't go to school. When I was out, I'd hang all day. I

didn't like school. I was on the run when I was a young teen. I quit school when I was in middle school. I don't wanna go back to school. I educate myself.

TBW: That's really interesting. Can you give The Beat some examples of how you educate yourself in the streets? What have you learned from hanging on your block?

E: I watch people, their body language. The way they're acting. I can tell if a girl wants to fit in. She give me money.

TBW: What else is there in your life, maybe something that interests only you but not your homies, maybe something you're good at, that maybe nobody knows you like to do or that you're talented at, besides hanging in the street? Maybe you're preparing for a career, so you'll have a life when you're grown beyond the streets.

E: I want to be an electrician.

TBW: Really? That's fascinating. Are you taking any classes down here (at the Ranch) to learn the things you need to know to become an electrician?

E: No. I already know how to be an electrician.

TBW: How have you learned? What have you learned? Who taught you?

E: My dad. He's an electrician. Sometimes I go out on jobs with him. He taught me wiring, how to put in plugs, jacks, all that stuff.

TBW: So you're dad's teaching you everything you need to know by showing you how to do it while he does it, like in somebody's house?

E: Yeah.

TBW: So you're learning on the job? And you enjoy your dad teaching you how to install wiring into a wall, all the things that electricians need to know?

E: Yeah, but I don't want to talk about it right now.

-Enano

From The Beat: You often surprise us. We don't always know what questions to ask you, so it's great when you help us out with clues about who you are out of the streets. Maybe someday you can join your father in his electrician's business and you can create a whole new life for yourself and even your own family and children that has nothing to do with the streets.

Streets, Get Ready

What's up with The Beat? It's your boy Mike writing. I achieve my goal of getting out this year. It's a major goal I am succeeding because I been in and out of jail and placements since 2006. They tried to send your boy back to the Ranch for 15 months, but I took a deal to go to 850 for three months. Now your boy touchdown in July instead of '09. So streets get ready. "We all we got."

-Mike The Beast

From The Beat: Maybe when you go to 850, you'll be exposed to new people and new thinking so you won't have to rely on tired cliché's like "we all we got." (You can look up the word cliché in your dictionary.) We're happy for you that you get out in July of this year, but if the streets are the only thing on your mind, be prepared for the consequences...

Voting For President

I feel like we need a new President for our state. I think this because our President that that we have now is no good. That man is no good. I think he's the kind of guy that could do something hard. Just do it, you know what I mean?

-James

From The Beat: No, we don't know what you mean because you have not told us what you mean. That is what makes a Beat piece. What would you like a new President to do? Do you care who the President is? Why? Will you vote when you turn 18? Why or why not? These questions are the details we want to know.



Fakes

I'm in Santa Clara County right now and I'm surrounded by fakes in my unit. There's like these ninjas in my unit that ain't fake, including me. Ninjas in here don't know where they from, don't know what they bang, don't know if they black, white, or Mexican. I can't stand these people. When you catch them in a lie they try to go away instead of manning up and stop lying. Then these ninjas act all hard, but when you bang on them they want to be all quiet. But when people try to say they from where I'm from and they ain't, I get hot, and that's when I get on the helmet. And they get all quiet I just be laughing hella hard.

For all you fake ninjas out there - do your homework before you rep something... you know what - just stop being fake!

-Scoob

From The Beat: We can understand you being upset about somebody saying they're from your neighborhood when they're not. But in the end you have to stop tripping off of everybody else and worry about yourself. If you stop to trip off everybody that you claim is fake then you're never gonna have any time for yourself or for any of the goals that you're trying to accomplish. Time is passing, and you have to figure out what you wanna do in life so you can have a roof over your head and put food on the table. Worry about yourself and quit worrying off other people.

I Feel Good About...

The things I feel good about myself are that I speak up my feelings. And I feel good about having a mother that loves me and is always there for me. I feel good about what I say, and the things that I have done that are good sometimes. I feel good about my health - that I have the best health ever. I thank God for everything.

-Candygirl

From The Beat: Good health, family, and good works - those are fine things to feel good about and to be grateful for.

What It Do Beat?

Well, let's talk about my life. Well, people think I'm a bad kid but I know a lot of people that I kick it with. They think that all my homeboys and home girls do is get into fights and hit people up. When I go to school I don't go to my class and a lot of my people think I'm bad, but I'm not. It's like they don't know me and it's like anybody can say that when they don't know me. And it's like wow, but I don't care what they say, cause they're not me. And someone said I got in a fight but I didn't and that's why I'm here. It's my time and it's like I didn't do anything, but I don't care.

I got three more months. And when I get out I'm not going to hang out with the people no more, cause I'd rather learn, now that they don't care I'm in here. Now I start to think like no one cares where I'm at. And I like wow, I know not to hang with them now cause I want to go to school, and get a job when I can, cause I'm only fifteen. So, happy b-day to me.

Ok now let me talk about something as achievements. Ok my dad paid for me to do football and my dad said that I wouldn't make it in football, but I did. I'm hella happy that I did it, so my dad feels like he owes me a lot of money. So now I think that was a great achievement. A lot of people think I won't be anything in life, but I don't.

-Tavares

From The Beat: Who says you can't be something in life? Forget about what all those people say. Don't listen to them. People are always gonna talk even though they don't know any better. All you gotta do is believe in yourself and you can do whatever you want.

We Get What We Deserve

Lookin' like a beast
Straight out of a horror movie
All the bullshhh you talkin'
Don't sound efficient to me
You don't even meet the equivalent of me
So I look at you squares
And think y'all funny
'Cause I'm a rare ninja
That's all about money
My money perseveres
Monday through Friday
Not even mentionin'
Saturday and Sunday
But I'm gone get that money
One way or another
I connect to it like
The ball and the string
Some call it tether

Keep my mom informed because I love her
Dressed up in turf uniform
Choppin' down the butler
Relax little brother 'cause I will be back
Ready to decide my plans for a new track
If I don't make it I'm gone leave you with my last words:
Every man gone get what he deserves

-Young Cash

From The Beat: Those last words are the truest you've spoken/But we're surprised they aren't making you chokin'/Those who keep doing what they did before/But believe that different consequences for them are in store/Are either kids or not in their right mind/So which are you, crazy or blind?/What's so rare about you putting money ahead of mother and god/U.S. prisons hold more than any in the world - food for thought/But "thought" is the last thing you're doin'/When thinking starts, maybe you'll see what's brewin'

Sacrifices

I can't believe I'm here, all because of beer. My life is taking a bad turn, now all my respect I have to earn.

I wanna go places I've never seen and go around the world. But to do things I wanna do I have to make sacrifices. One would be to put in time on a job and school. Stop doing things I wanna do that I think are fun that are getting me into trouble. I need to learn something that I could be really good at.

Basically I have to do things in life that I don't want to do, to get things I do want - "Sacrifices."

-Eddie

From The Beat: It sounds like you have some good plans for your future. You're right in acknowledging that success can take sacrifices—but those sacrifices are definitely worth it once they pay off.

Locked Up

I'm locked up and all I got is my words.

I can't do anything. I guess I'm all out of verbs.
Staring up at these walls, I feel alone in this world -
a world full of hatred - always behind locked doors
while these stupid attorneys show or feel no remorse.
Always crying about some bull shh, always hating, never love.
Why can't they look at the bright side, and give me a hug.
What they don't know is they put a good man in cuffs!

-Big Keno

From The Beat: We believe they put a good man in cuffs too. But you know what... you must let all that drama slide. All these attorneys, judges, POs - this is only a small fraction of your life. But that's really up to you. It's up to you. After everything is said and done, and you do your time, it's goin' to be up to you to not come back and fall into the system again. It's going to be up to you whether you want to keep dealing with all these attorneys and judges.

Hey Beat

Hey Beat I'd like to talk about how messed up you are. You never publish my shhh, what the fudge is up with that G? Well with all due respect y'all is whack, but whatever, you don't faze me.

Stay up to all doing time.

-Miklo

From The Beat: Whatever the reason we didn't publish your piece it might not be our fault. If you write a whole bunch of inappropriate shhh like killing people, and gangbanging on paper, or just simply not making sense in your piece then we're not gonna publish it. But also shh happens. Your piece might have got lost or something but we apologize for that. On another note we wish you the best of luck with the rest of your time 'cause you don't faze us either- just kidding. We hope to hear from you soon or not. Your call.

Ten Things I Feel Good About

My son.
I'm optimistic and
Open minded and
Loving.
I have beautiful eyes.
I'm a good friend and
A good mom.
I'm faithful and
Honest and
Trusting.

-Mona

From The Beat: You should feel good about these qualities. Hooray for you.

Time For A New Look In The Oval Office!

If everyone could vote that would be bad ass, homie! We'll have better presidents, and presidents will be different races like Mexicans, blacks, or Asians and so on. They (the voters) always pick the white people and that's why no other races try to even run for president. Also you got to be rich and over 35. If we had presidents that were different colors it will help because it would give some color in our world.

Well Beat till next times.

-Abraham

From The Beat: That's why this year's election is so historical, we are so close to either having the first woman president in Senator Hillary Clinton, as well as the first African American in Senator, Barack Obama. This is an exciting time!

The Good Life

I'm 1,000 like 10 times 100ed
I'm gone keep it real
As solid as you want it
No stories, given it to you simple
But I will never be plain
Pass me the bottle of Patrone
Guaranteed I will forget you name
My grind is top secret
Go, you tryin' to find out my sequence
Case I just go
Livin' the good life, as you know
Stay creepin', never speakin'
About my dough
Never goin' back to jail
I'm not gone fall off, bro

-Young Cash

From The Beat: We hope you don't mind if we keep it real, too/But we don't believe your promises could possibly be true/"Stay creepin'" but "never come back to jail? Don't be a foo"/If you like takin' orders, seein' only boys, and eatin' trife/Then we have to agree with you: You're "livin' the good life!"

The Incarceration Life Isn't Easy

One of my achievements is to get out. I've been locked up for a year without getting out once. I've tried to get my credits while being in here, so when I do get out I could at least say I got something out of it.

The system is just playing games with me, sending me here and then adding time on top of that. I went to the ranch two times and, I got failed. I was finally going to go home after doing 5 months at the ranch and that's just for weekends. Then I got failed.

After being in here this long waiting to go home, my grandma said she doesn't want me living with her. So they rescheduled my court date because of that. Then probably they'll send me to a group home.

I was going to just run but my mom's going to try and get legal custody of me. If she can't, I'll probably be locked up forever, until I'm 18, then live on my own because I'm not living in a group home.

-Alex

From The Beat: It seems you "were failed" a lot in the system. You have been let down a lot but it seems you might be failing the system as well. Instead of focusing so far on the future try to keep the next few steps in mind. Solve the problem of getting out of the system first by behaving well and working hard to get to the ranch and then get out of the system.

Softball

Hey Beat! Well, I'm going to talk about the topic today because I achieved something that I'm glad I did.

Some people think it might be stupid but when I was 12 years old, I played softball for about four years. The team I was on was undefeated. We were all confident as a team because our coach keep us motivated. We were undefeated all through the season. The season was over so we had a ceremony with the whole league. We got first place. I was so happy because I was playing for a long time then the team I was finally got first place.

-Lugo

From The Beat: Of course this isn't a stupid achievement. It sounds like you were very successful and you should be proud of it. Is there any chance that you can play again?

Grateful For Friends

I've been here for about several months. This is the longest I've been in here. My squad's gone and my girl got failed. The week that all happened was looking messed up. Man, these females in here always talking, hell, me too after they got my girl failed. But my 'lil partners brought me back to my spirits. Because when all that went down, I was crying, I just felt bad, and I'm always a person who has a smile on my face.

I'm very grateful for those girls. They listen to my problems and give me feedback all the time when I'm talking to them about my girl. They don't judge me or criticize me, and that makes me happy to know I got friends like that. They're friends that I can truly say that I could always count on in here and on the outs. And I never thought I could trust anyone I was locked up with.

But yeah, its all good. I'm going to make it through. I have to go to the porch and then I'll be with my squad. I miss my girl, on the real. We some what have problems but I'll always love her and that's solid talk right there. Even if it doesn't last, I will always love her.

-S

From The Beat: Friends who will listen to you when you need to be heard, friends who will listen without making judgment, are good friends to have. Count your blessings. Good luck to you.

I Can't Trust No One

Hey, what's up with The Beat? This your girl Linda. Well, today I'm gonna write a little something.

Friends – ain't got none, because I can't trust no one. I have been taken advantage of by the person I trusted.

One night I went to the homie's pad to kick it. One drink lead to another. Next thing you know, my homie took away my everything. Forced me to do what you wouldn't believe. Even had me kicking and screaming. I woke up the next day to the guy who raped me. He was all up on me acting like he didn't know anything. I felt sick to my tummy. Left his pad not even knowing I couldn't walk normal cause he hurt me badly. I didn't remember till the next day. I was sitting there when it hit me. The person I knew wasn't what he claimed to be.

Now I don't trust anyone, because I was taken advantage of by the person I thought was my homie.

-Linda

From The Beat: Linda, what happened to you was wrong, in so many ways. Yes, it was a violation of your trust. But it was also a violation of the law. We understand that experiencing something so terrible could make you distrustful. But please believe us when we tell you that most people do not behave the way your former "homie" did. You are punishing yourself and depriving yourself of the fruits of real friendship if you imagine that all guys would behave like that. Most guys do not behave that way. Exercising caution is important, but it's also important to learn how to tell the bad fruit from the good. We urge you to talk with a trusted adult about what happened to you. The emotional damage can be as harmful as the physical damage. There are good people in the world, and you need them on your side. We do understand your reluctance to trust others. It's a natural response to a terrible event. Talking about it is part of the healing process. Please let us know how you're doing.

Voting

Hell yeah, it will be different if they let felons vote because there's hella people locked up and they will make a difference.

Yeah, I do think they would be different laws for the people that get in trouble.

I think that immigrants should be able to vote because they work hella hard and this used to be part of Mexico. So therefore, they can vote for some new laws for the immigrants. I think hella immigration laws would change and everything would be good.

-Young Politician

From The Beat: You are right to recognize the large number of felons that are locked up in America. There are so many laws that have to do with how these people are treated so it would make sense that they would get a right to vote. And yeah, California was a part of Mexico – another great point. Have you ever thought of being lawyer?

Close Call

What's up Beat, it's me Luis, going to finish the story from last week.

When my brother was choking me and I would breathe everything stopped. My heart stopped beeping. I stopped breathing and I could hear nothing until he let me go. I didn't even feel it when I fell to the ground. When he let me go I was dead. Then I started hearing the TV and started breathing. My heart started beeping. When I opened my eyes I was on the floor. Then I got up and I was like what the hell? Then I started chasing him around the house. Then I got him and I got him back. I beat the hell out of him. When my mom stopped us, my brother got grounded. Then I was in the living room watching TV and it was a good day. That's all I got to write. Late.

-Luis

From The Beat: Why do you and your brother play like that? That's dangerous. What would have happened if you didn't start breathing again? You would have been dead! Y'all need to be careful.

If Everyone Voted

Yes, I think the law would be different if everyone voted. Immigrants would be able to decide about what benefits them, when it comes to voting. I think it goes for felons, too. When voting, people usually would look for a president that suits them.

Il in all – it's the same. With fresh blood running for president, something different might happen.

-Lai

From The Beat: It seems like a lot of the country and young people are excited about this "something different" that you are talking about here. But do you think it is about a person or the system?

Confessions Of A Car Thief

Stealing cars with my magic keys from Hondas to Expeditions

Stealing cars was an everyday mission

With my money making skills

From car systems and rims turning them into 100 dollar bills Whether it was day or night that's what kept me alive

It was my everyday job

But finally I got caught

Now I'm in juvenile hall

Surrounded by these brick walls

When I can be out stealing cars or getting in high speed chases Looking in my mirror seeing the cops' stupid faces

Making sharp turns

'Cause the car tires I like to burn

My confession of a car thief has come to an end.

-J

From The Beat: We hope that your acts as a car thief have come to an end too. Stealing cars is only gonna get you in trouble. How would you like it if your car was stolen? That's not cool, people need their cars to get around. How would you like it if you had to take your grandma to the hospital and you wake up the next morning and your car is gone cause somebody stole it? Think about it. Why don't you earn your own money to buy a car? People work hard to buy cars and pay the bills. They don't need thieves to make it difficult for them.

My Music

The most difficult thing I achieved is learning to make music. I learned how to play the piano and make good music that could make people dance.

I also performed at clubs, talent shows, and a lot of paid shows.

What most surprised me was that when I went and performed at my 1st talent show, my group GYB3 didn't even have our original copy. We had to perform from scratch on a whole different beat and one of our members was missing. That was hella cool. We won some money and people were running up to us trying to give out they number so we could date. That was one of my personal achievements.

-Hasan

From The Beat: Music is a great achievement and can bring you great success. It seems like you have great incentive about getting out of the Hall: Going back to all your fans.

Achieve House Arrest

What up, Beat? What I wanna achieve is to pass my three-month house arrest, because I'm gonna hella be tempted. So, we'll see what happens. Wish me luck y'all.

-Martizzie

From The Beat: This will be a major achievement because you will have to really make a change. What is your plan to achieve this? Perhaps if you really think about having a strategy while you are in here, achieving your goals will be easier on the outs.

Them Days, Or Is It Daze?

Dazed, thinking of the past.
I had a blast
being high was all I knew best.
Surroundings was a blur
I think I grew up too fast.
Time goes by,
everyone comes and go.
Forget a boyfriend
they are all faulty
you know?
Enough said
its just gonna be me
and my girl deedee,
against all.
I love you ma. One love.

-Churise

From The Beat: This is a sick little flow. Even though it's short, it drops a lot of wisdom and tells us a lot about you and your life.

Love In The Eyes of a Homegirl

Sitting in this hell hole,
wondering what I could do
as I lay on my bed
all I think 'bout is you.
Hours go by
but they feel like days.
Each moment without you is just a heartbeat away.
Each day that goes by I feel as if we're farther apart,
but my love for you will never part.
So when I'm alone in my room, and I'm thinking of you
I wonder if you miss me and you really do care.
I love you and I need you and without you there's no me
but when I get out of here I know our hearts will be
together forever.

-Sad Eyes

From The Beat: Another touching love poem from the ladies - thanks for sharing the way you feel. Writing is a great way to express yourself to a loved one.

GED Achievement

My achievement was accomplishing my GED and my new long-term goal is to go to college for 2-4 years. I'm going to try and get a job at juvenile hall but it might not work, because I got some serious felonies. So hopefully they don't look at my juvenile record. I'm going to see what happens though. I'll get it sealed but I think they can still look at it. I'm outskies.

-Nate

From The Beat: Hopefully it will work because it seems like you would really understand what some of these young people would be going through, and that might be really different than a counselor who never got in trouble.

Modeling

I really want to be a model. I think taking modeling pictures are very pretty and a wonderful feeling. I was gonna be a model, but my grades weren't very good.

In order for me to be a model or take modeling pictures, I have to have a 2.0 or higher. I can't have anything lower than a 2.0 or I can't be a model. When I get out I want to get good grades, and hopefully I can sign up for modeling.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: Well, this seems like a great goal to work towards - especially since you have to keep your grades up to do it. Good luck, maybe we'll see you on America's Next Top Model.

Achieve Getting Along With Family

One thing I think is an achievement to me is that I got to get along well with my family, because we have lots of problems. Separately, a lot of my family has problems ... I have a dad, a step-dad, brothers and sisters from different dads. They are all my half brothers.

My sisters and my brothers don't get along with my step-dad. They fight and move out of the house and I always try to keep everything cool. It's like I can make peace for my family.

Another thing I've achieved is gaining credits for high school - at least I have enough to graduate next year because I'm doing all my schoolwork and I think that's good.

-Youngster

From The Beat: Being a peacemaker in a family is a really important job and often a difficult one. This is a great achievement. Good luck with school, too. It sounds like you would make a great counselor - perhaps take the skills you have at home into the community.

The CASHEE Achievement

Hey Beat, I'm gonna tell you what I achieved without knowing that I did. I didn't think I could ever pass the CASHEE. I always thought I wasn't smart enough but I always had said I was gonna graduate high school. So when I went to placement, I took the CASHEE without studying. I forgot all about it. So when they said they have test scores, I was like what test scores? They told me I passed.

All I have to do is catch up on my credits and I'll graduate next year. I want to be a nurse for babies and old people. So, that's my next achievement. Thanks Beat for listening to my good news.

I just wanna say - to all - keep your head up and don't give up if you want to graduate - you will. Well alrato.

-Smokey

From The Beat: It sounds like you didn't even know how smart you actually are, so you should take advantage of it and complete your education and move forward to nursing school - which is so important.

Corrupt

Why is the system so corrupted? People get locked up for petty stuff - crimes they didn't even commit. Honestly what happens to innocent until proven guilty, if that was true why do people get locked up while waiting for court? This place sucks. Really - all I can do is sit here and wait till I'm out.

-Rainbow

From The Beat: That's an interesting question - why are you locked up before you go to court? Maybe you should think about becoming a lawyer since you are so familiar with the justice system.

Achieve Probation

I hope to achieve finishing probation when I get out of juvie this time. I also want to get a job and raise my kid like a good father and be there for my lady. I want to buy her a house and marry her. This is what I want to achieve because my father didn't do this and I want to break the chain off that and just basically be there.

Also, I want to show everyone who doubts me that I can do it, especially punk-a-- probation officers and judges and DAs.

-Ramon

From The Beat: Breaking the chain of what our parents did is difficult, but even recognizing that you are in danger of becoming your father is a step away from that future.

What I Feel

Well what's cracking Beat? Me, just posted up in the Hall. Just waiting for my release day which is July 1st. I've been down since December 6, 2007 so that's a pretty long minute, so it's going to be kind of weird to just leave from this place and get used to the outs, but my hopes are up there.

I am eighteen already so this is my last time around these Halls. Next time I am next door in county jail, but that shhh ain't going to happen.

As soon as I am out I am out for good. The Beat asked me how am I going to stay out. Well I said I have a job planned out, I am going to go to church and stay busy all day.

Well I don't got much to say but to all up in those other units to keep their heads up. Much love and respect, alratos.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a plan come July. However, we also want to hear about your goals, your dreams. Without any barriers, how would you carry out your life? What career would you most like to pursue? Is a family in your future, or is that too far down the road for you to consider? Tell us about it this week if you are so inclined Shorty.

Going to CYA

Hey what up Beat, this is "Playboy" coming from the tightest unit.

I'm gonna talk about me getting sent to CYA. I got sentenced on February 5th, am gonna be gone for two years up in Preston.

It surprised me when I got sentenced to CYA. My family is surprised too, also stressing and depressed. One thing though, I got to do my best in CYA and get out. I thought I would never get sent there, but never say never, two years ain't long, but it's a waste of time. So I should be leaving in one month and start my time and get out and do good, get back on track, like the last time I got out. I could use my time in CYA, instead of wasting it, by getting my High School diploma; I'm really close too.

Also gonna try to get college classes while I'm in there. Then work out of course and just get educated in the books so I could bring it back to the outs. Also, one more thing, learn how to write poems.

So I'm gonna end this with respect and love to all my boys. Oh yea, stay up, see you soon. Can't keep a good man down, ha ha.

-Playboy

From The Beat: CYA is certainly a drag, but it sounds like you have a strong family to support you through in your challenges ahead. It's great that you have such focused goals. What will be next after that diploma? If you haven't thought about it, dare to dream a little bit and let us in on your long-term goals.

If Everyone Could Vote, Doesn't Make A Difference

I don't think it will make a difference if immigrants could vote, because even as American citizens our votes don't count. All of our votes just go to the electoral college. All of the votes of the people are popular votes and the electoral college votes are the ones that choose the president. So convicted felons, immigrants, or U.S. citizens – it doesn't make a difference.

-Larry

From The Beat: In a way, you're right – the electoral college system makes it seem like our individual votes don't count but it is still a way to make our voice heard. It sounds like you are fed up with the system, but what do you think of ways to change it?

What I Want To Achieve

What I would like to achieve in my future is to get off probation. I would also like to achieve getting my high school diploma because that is what I always wanted. The fact is that I have almost all my credits.

I will be taking my CAHSEE testing in here in March next month. I have to just focus on my program and finishing my four months that I have to go. I'm out. Alrato.

-Payasa

From The Beat: It seems like you have your whole education plan down, which is a big achievement. Now you just have to work it out. Good luck.

My Achievements

One thing I'm proud of achieving is I finally got to play for a high school football team and got to start the whole season because I worked my ass off in the workouts before the season started. But, in the end, I had a good season and became defensive player of the year.

-J

From The Beat: Nice! Congratulations on your achievement. Often, the achievements we work on the hardest are the most memorable and satisfying.

Wishing She Was Here

I wish that my girl was here with me. I miss her so much. I know that this is off topic, but I ain't feeling the topics tonight. So I decided that I'm going to write about my girl.

My girl is so special to me. When I'm with her, I feel untouchable. All my worries go away and I don't have a problem in the world. She make me feel so brand new – she is it. I don't know how else to explain her. I miss her so much – it's ridiculous. I can't wait to see her. That's all I got to say, I love you girl and know I'm thinking of ya. I'm out.

-Cupcake

From The Beat: When someone makes you feel untouchable, you know you've found someone special. It seems like she is a real motivation to you for getting out.

Beat Within

Q-onda Beat? My latest achievements have been getting hall time. I got six months hall time and I'm getting out in July. I've been here for three months so far and have about five more months to go. Well, it's an achievement to me because in the last two years I've been failing ranch, placements and everything else. But now I finally got hall time and have a release date.

-Chino

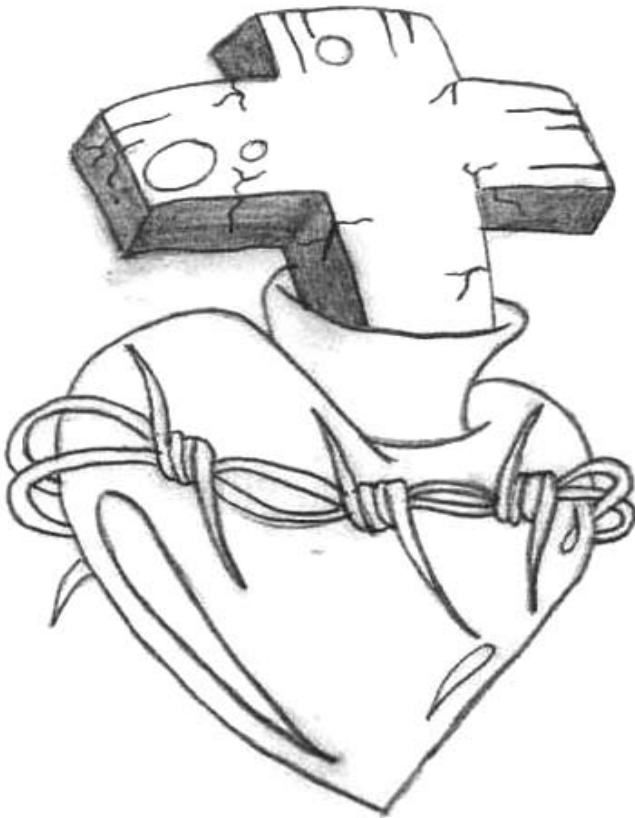
From The Beat: We're not sure if getting hall time is exactly an achievement in the true sense of the word, but perhaps doing the time here will help lead you to greater achievements as you have time to think about your life.

Lets All Vote!

I think everyone should be able to vote, even the convicted felons – because they live in this country and it's going to be their president. I just feel that the immigrants shouldn't be able to vote because they here illegally and I know that we can't go to they country and vote.

-Tamaka

From The Beat: You say felons should be allowed to vote because they live here, but immigrants also live here – so by that reasoning shouldn't they be allowed to vote, too?



Back from C.Y.A

What's up Beat this is Angel once again in the unit. I haven't been here in about two years. I been at CYA and got released December 14th, got here February 2nd. I was out for two months. That's messed up but I wasn't thinking right, I stole a car with one of my homies and got caught up and now they can't send me back to CYA because I maxed out from there. They are trying to give me five to seven months of Hall time.

To all people who read this it is not worth it to steal cars and do stupid stuff like that. I been comin' to the Hall since I was twelve and now I'm turning 16 on Valentine's Day.

I went to CYA for having a shank in the Hall. I was only fourteen when I went to CYA. I was fighting a lot in there. I got these new gang new dots on my face and got stitches in my lip and somebody put gas in my water bottle in there. It ain't no joke in there. But not all the stories are true. There are no stabbings...well once in a while only a few staff assaults and about four or five riots a year. When I was there I was in twenty-four fights, lost about eleven and was in one riot. All I got to say to my homies is don't trust nobody. There I met like eighty homies and only trusted the homies from Morgan Hill and Redwood City.

Now that I'm back in the Hall I hate it. My homie from Santa Clara is going to the Ranch. Good luck, just do your time and get out as soon as possible. All right then Beat, 'til next time.

-Angel

From The Beat: It is an important step to realize the error of your ways and seek to correct it. Two more years inside is a stiff punishment, meaning that you will exit the system as an adult. You mentioned the need for others to earn your trust, but what other life lessons have you learned during your time served? Educate those of us who have been fortunate enough never to go through your experience.

A Huge Achievement

What I want to achieve is to first graduate and get a high school diploma and go to college and come and work here at the hall and be an inspirational counselor to someone and maybe help someone in the future and maybe give him more options then I have now.

-Future Youth Worker

From The Beat: You're right, being an inspirational counselor seems like it could really help someone in trouble - especially if you have a similar background or experience as them.

My Achievements

Today I'm going to talk about achievements. What I want to achieve is to be a mechanic with my dad and get a lot of money.

Also, to live with my mom and get off of probation. Buy myself a nice car and customize it so all the homies would go places with me. That way they don't have to worry about getting pulled over by a cop 'cause it's not stolen.

Anyways that's all until next week. Peace.

-Porky

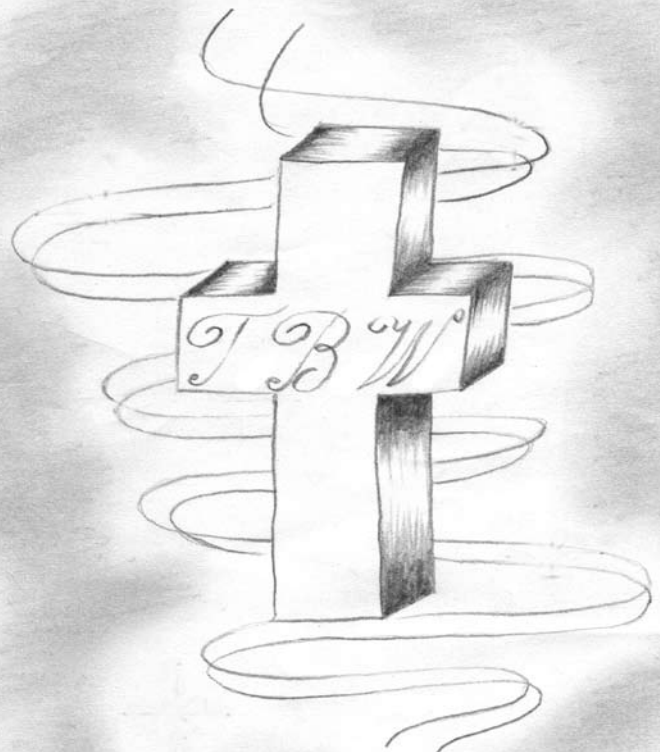
From The Beat: Well achieve your goals and don't let anything stop you. We're glad to hear you change your way of thinking. We're glad to see you directing your life into a more positive direction. Keep up your positive attitude it will take you a long way in life.

Voting Barack

If I were to vote, I would vote for Barack Obama because he is a man. Hillary Clinton couldn't control her man - so she probably couldn't control the USA. Hillary also changed her mind about taking the troops out of Iraq, and that's all bad.

-Pink

From The Beat: Well, Bill Clinton couldn't control himself and he was still a pretty good president? Does your woman control you?



Waiting, Wishing

Sitting in the room,
staring at the walls,
thinking of what I've done,
waiting for the evening program to start,
so I can call my mom,
telling her that I miss her.
I'm waiting for my court day.
I wish I were home instead.

-Isaias

From The Beat: If you were home, what would you do differently? Clearly, you don't want to make a career out of spending time in jail. What are the first changes you will make when you get home?



Wasting Time

The sky is blue.
Every day I think of you.
I call you my boo.
I give you hugs and kisses
but I have anger
'cause you bug me.
They say you are in danger
but they lie.
Now I am locked up
wasting the time of my life.

-D

From The Beat: Having a loved one to think about can be a very comforting thing. You have a lot to go home to. You said it: being locked up is wasting your time. What changes do you need to make so you can start living your life more constructively? Are there apologies to be made? What do you need to do to make things right?

My Achievement

The main achievement I want to accomplish is graduating from high school and going on to college. I know it's going to take a lot of work and dedication, but I know I can do it if I set my mind to it. I want to make my family proud of me for the first time in a long time.

I want it so bad because that is what will get me my dream job: working on bikes like Choppers or racing bikes such as Suzukis. Hopefully I can make it and then say that it is one of my accomplishments.

-Edgar

From The Beat: You have all the right parts to this plan: a way to get there, the realization that it's going to be hard work, a passionate motivation, and the reward at the end. There's nothing quite like accomplishing something that you've worked long and hard for and seeing the pride of your family. Good job. Keep your mind focused and get it done.

An Interview About "Achievement"

The Beat: What would you consider your greatest achievement?

Albert: Baseball. I hit the most home runs in my league. I'm a good base stealer. I'm a pitcher and have a good fastball- 74 MPH! I have a decent slider, a good curveball, and a good slowball - it seems that that ball hardly moves.

The Beat: What has baseball taught you about life?

Albert: It's taught me that there's money to be had, along with fame and girls.

The Beat: Have you thought seriously about becoming a pro?

Albert: I've thought about it but I want to be a contractor. I'd build everything and have my won business. I've had some experience helping to build a house. It came out nice, too.

The Beat: What have you learned in the hall that will help you later in life?

Albert: I've learned to love my life and that freedom in a precious thing. When I get out, I'm going to look for a real job which will take up all of my energy.

-Albert

From The Beat: Baseball can teach us a lot about life - working hard, making a plan, cooperating with others, and yes, that there are rewards for our efforts. The contracting business is also a good profession. Take what you've learned here - your appreciation for life, and apply it to your work. You'll go far.

If Everyone Could Vote

If everyone could vote the world would be put in the ground. If younger people could get help to pick the right people to vote for, then it would be good. If people vote not knowing what they are doing, just voting for someone they don't know about, then they are going to mess everybody up. That's not going to be funny.

-Dennis

From The Beat: You're right - people need to be informed to make a wise choice. Your informed vote can make a real difference in creating change and alleviating a lot of the suffering in this world. Make sure you retain your right to vote by staying straight. Educate yourself so you can make a positive impact. Work hard. Do well.

On Voting For President

If I could vote I would vote for Hillary Clinton because she would help out the immigrants and the public schools.

-Isaias

From The Beat: Casting your vote for these important issues can truly change the lives of countless people in need, and change the world. Make sure to stay on the path that will allow you to make your voice heard. It does matter.

Dear Beat Within

Today I'm going to write about how it's been going good for me.

I've been locked up for four months, and I found out that the girl I loved cheated on me with one of the dudes from a different hood, one of my enemy's, but it don't matter because I think it was meant to be.

Being in here has made me realize about what I want in life and how I've matured more.

I've met a beautiful girl in here and we are going out when I get out and I hope we do have a good relationship.

I'm going to do well by getting my GED and get a career to be an architect and make a good life and stay out of jail.

Later's Beat, I might be out by next week so peace.

- Anthony

From the Beat: One word stands out more than any other in your writing. "Matured" the question we have is, have you matured? The first thing you mention is your enemy from another hood? With this comment it sounds like your still in the gang life. It's good you talk about a good carrier and a GED, but remember talk is cheap. Prove to every one you can do it.

Love Came And Went

Before I came into the Juvenile hall

We were closer then ever

We went to the mall and moves

We would watch the sun set

We had it all

Didn't care what people thought

We were young and in love

Then I ended up here

She was cool with it

She was willing to wait for me

Until she talked to my ex

My ex filled her head with a lot of lies

She wrote me telling me what's up?

Now she don't want anything to do with me

- King Henry

From The Beat: It's too bad you had to get the "Dear John" letter, yet maybe its better that you got it now and not later. Now focus your time and energy on getting out of detention, because once you get out remember the old saying. "There are always plenty of fish in the sea."

Achievements

To the Beat Within, hello my name is Erica.

I've been locked up in here for a month.

I'm a young mother of a little boy

who is one year old.

He's my world.

I hope that I get out this Friday.

I hope everything goes good for me.

I am going to get my GED

when I get out, and just stay home and be a good mom to my child.

Thanks for listening to me.

-Erica

From The Beat: This was short, and would have been nice to hear more. The only thing you mention about achievements is that you're going to get your GED, and be a good mom. This is a lot easier said then done. If you get out of Friday let us know how things are going once you get out.

Being Thankful

Today I want to write about how much I thank the Lord for showing me His will in court.

Today I almost got committed for two years for violating my probation. I kept praying to the Lord so He could show me His will. They told me that I'll be going to a treatment center for 3 months. That's why I thank the Lord.

- Anthony

From The Beat: Prayer is one of the strongest forms of hope and we're glad you're doing it. We want to see you get back on the right track and make a good life for yourself.

Dear Beat Within

Today I'm going to write about how good the day has been. Today I went to court and it went good because the Judge was being pretty cool and let me get out on the Community Custody Program.

The thing is the people at CCP haven't come to interview me yet. Hopefully they come pretty soon.

To stay out of jail I will have to complete CCP and get my GED and get a good career, so I can get money for my son and me.

- Elmer

From The Beat: It's good to know you have a plan when you get out, but remember your son doesn't need just money he needs you. Do what you have to so you stay out of jail, this way you can take care of your son and excel in your career.

Achievements In My Life

Well what I have achieved in life is that I graduated in middle school, and I also achieved honor roll because I did what I had to do to receive my honor roll.

What I would like to achieve in life is a master's degree and become successful in life.

I would also like to become a Judge to make money and to have kids so that I can support them with the money I earned.

I would also like to help my mother with the things she needs help with because I don't want her to be old and not have any one around.

- Sidney

From The Beat: This sounds like a great plan when you get out. You for one know you can do it because as you said before, you knew what you had to do to get what you needed done. Keep to your plan and show yourself and every one you love you can change.

Love

To me love is a strong word,
it's a word that could lead to hate.

Love takes on being truthful,
honest, and having deep feelings for another person.

I have been in love only one time,
and I expressed different ways and showing it.
That's what came to having my beautiful daughter. Right now loves a thing that I can't find in someone. The only

love I have is for my daughter,
being there and first seeing her
made all my love pour into her heart.

'Till this say none of that has changed,
I will always love her with my all my heart.

- Amber

From the Beat: And you should love your daughter with all your heart, and continue loving her. The only problem is you can't do what you say while you are locked up. Find it in yourself to get your life straight if not for you do it for your daughter. We are quiet sure you don't want your daughter growing up seeing their mother in prison?

The Game I Loved

One achievement I made was when I made the football team.

My family was happy, and so was I even though I was third string I was still happy to be apart of something.

When I used to play in the games they never put me in the game because I was too short. I really didn't care to play, and I was just happy to be on the team.

-Rastie

From The Beat: One of the best feelings is simply being apart of something, something that is important to you. One question, in the title "The Game I Loved" did you put 'loved' because you no longer care for the game or was there another reason?

Me Reclamo

Siempre me anda reclamando a mi mismo porque no supe lo que hice. Por eso estoy encerrado. A veces le reclamo a mi hermano.

A veces le pido a Dios que nos ayude para ya no hacer cosas malas porque Dios es el único que te puede ayudar a salir de aquí.

From The Beat: ¿Por qué le reclamas a tu hermano? ¿Ha sido el una mala influencia en tu vida? ¿Que has aprendido de lo que ha vivido?

My Blame

I blame myself for not being aware of what I did. That's why I'm locked up. I also blame my brother some times.

Some times I ask God to help me not do bad things because God is the only one who can help me get out of here.

-Henry, Marin

From The Beat: Why do you blame your brother for your mistakes? Has he been a bad influence in your life? What have you learned from what you have lived?

Algún Día

Orale carnales, les digo que tengan esperanza porque algún día vamos a salir de este lugar. Quiero salir afuera o que me inscriban en un programa. Tal vez me manden afuera de aquí, a Los Angeles para estar con los camaradas o con los carnales. Así que tengan esperanza y mantengan su cabeza arriba.

From The Beat: O sea que todo lo que quieres y piensas es en estar con tus camaradas y carnales. Deberías de tomar este tiempo para pensar en los errores que estas cometiendo. Si sigues con la misma mentalidad que llevas, no vas llegar muy lejos en la vida. Use tu mente para pensar positivamente.

Some Day

Hey brothers, I'm telling you to have faith because one day I'll get out of here. I want to get out or to get into a program. They may send me to LA and I'll be with my friends. So keep your hopes and your head up.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: So all you want is a chance to be with your friends again. You should take this time to really think about the errors you are committing. If you keep the same mentality, you won't get to far in life. Use your time to think positively.

Se Fueron

Esto me pasó cuando tenía ocho años en mi país. Fue un amigo mío. Cuando me vió en el suelo, me recogió y me llebo para la casa de mi abuela que ya se murió. Yo la quería tanto pero se fue como a mi padre y a mi abuelo.

From The Beat: Nosotros sentimos mucho tus pérdidas. Tienes que tener en cuenta que nosotros nacimos para algún día irnos como ellos. Antes que todo, la vida que decidas vivir, es la vida que tú mismo formarás. ¿Entonces dínos, que hay en tu futura vida?

They Left

This happened when I was eight years old in my country. It was a friend of mine. When he saw me laying down on the ground, he picked me up and took me to my grandmother's house who is already dead. I love her so much like my dad and grandfather who are also gone.

-Jose, Marin

From The Beat: We are very sorry for your losses. You have to be strong and also have to keep in mind that we are born to leave like they have. But before all, the life you decide to live is the life that you will build. So, tell us, what do you see in your future life?

Este Lugar

La única forma de estar furioso es estar furioso. Yo me pongo furioso porque estoy encerrado.

En todas formas pienso en mi mama y especialmente en toda mi familia. Toda mi familia se me viene a la cabeza. Por eso ya me quiero ir de aquí. Ya no quiero venir a este lugar nunca jamás. Es todo lo que tengo que decir. Espero y tengan un buen día. Es todo.

From The Beat: Que te quedes afuera o vuelvas a este lugar depende de ti y de nadie más. Las opciones van a estar ahí siempre, buenas y malas, y eres tú el único tiene el derecho de escoger lo mejor o peor para ti. Todo está en ti. Tú decides!

This Place

The only way for me to be furious is to be furious. I get furious because I'm locked up.

Anyways, I think about my mom and especially my whole family. All my family members come to my mind. That's why I want to get out of here. I don't ever want to come here. This is all I have to say. I hope you have a great day. It's all.

-Erivan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Whether you want to stay out of here or in, depends in you and nobody else. The options will be present at all times, good and bad, and you are the only one who has the power to choose what better or worse for you. You decide!

Quiero Estar Con Mi Jefecita

Yo tengo miedo perder a mi jefita porque yo a ella la quiero hasta morir. Tengo mucho miedo de perderla. Por mi culpa, ella ha sufrido mucho cuando estoy en las calles banging con los amigos. Pero saliendo de aquí voy a ser mejor que antes porque quiero cambiar mi vida. Ya quiero estar siempre con mi madrecita querida que la quiero mucho. También quiero a mi jefecito a quien también he hecho mucho sufrir.

Ellos siempre estan conmigo en las buenas y en las malas. Yo nunca voy a dejar de pensar en ellos. Donde quiera que se encuentren, los quiero mucho. Jefecitos, ustedes son mi vida. Yo sin ustedes no sería nadie en mi vida. También quiero mucho a mi lil' carnalito.

From The Beat: Que bien que aunque sea reconoces todo el sacrificio y el efuerzo que han hecho por ti. Esperamos que este tiempo te ayude reflexionar en las cosas que estas haciendo y pensar más en los sentimientos de las personas que realmente te han dado vida y todo lo que tengas. Se nota el querer hacia tu familia, ahora aplicarlo y demuestra tu amor hacia ellos. ¿Cómo? Esa respuesta tú lo sabes.

I Want To Be With My Mother

I'm scared to loose my mother because I love her to death. I'm very scared to loose her. Because of me, she suffers a lot when I'm hanging with my friends. But when I get out, I'm going be better than before because I want to change my life. I want to be with my mother who I love so much. I also love my father who I also have hurt so much.

They are always with me through good and bad. I'll never stop thinking of them. Wherever they are, I love them. Parents, you are my life and without you, I would be nothing in life. I also love my little brother so much.

-Salvador, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: It's good that at least you recognize the sacrifice and effort they have done for you. We hope this time helps you to reflect on the things you are doing and to think of the feelings from those who have given you life and all you have. From this writing, we can notice how much you love your family, but now you have to apply and she them the love you got for them. How? You know the answer.

The Ups and Downs Of My Life

What's up Beat? This is Cain. I'm currently locked up on a 9 year, 8 month sentence. Just four years ago, I was facing 3 strikes and a 25 to life sentence. Believe it or not, this was my first felony in California. Because I had previous serious felonies in another state, I became a 3 strike candidate. I kept thinking, "This isn't over; it can't be. I'm only 22 years old."

After spending 5 months in county jail, I finally got a break; a 6 year probation term and 1 year county. I did my time and got out.

I had no family to help me out. I had to start from the ground up, but I made a decision that I wouldn't get high or do crime. For the first time in my life I established an apartment, car, bank account. All the things to succeed in life.

Then all at once, in a matter of two weeks, I lost my

Cain writes from Salinas Valley State Prison. He wants to share his story and encourage others not to give up. Don't ever give up on yourself, Cain...you can make good things happen again! Cain writes us from his heart over in Salinas Valley State Prison, in Soledad, CA.

job, my car got towed and I couldn't find it, and I lost my apartment, not because I was doing drugs or messing up, just bad luck. I had established myself legally and I lost it all. I just gave up on myself. I couldn't believe all that could happen even when you're doing good.

I found myself back on the street getting high, doing crime. Now, here I am doing 80% on a 9 year, 8 month sentence. The good news is they gave me half time credit at county, plus I got past county time credit. I have been down three and a half years, but the other good news is I get out in two years.

I'll never give up on myself no matter what happens in the future. That is what I've learned.

I'll never give up on myself no matter what happens in the future. That is what I've learned.

JESSE DUARTE

Jesse Duarte delivers a knockout poem from R J Donovan Dept of Corrections and Rehabilitation in San Diego, CA. The poem speaks volumes. We encourage you Jesse to keep writing, you have plenty to offer!

My Life and Pain And Hate And With Sorrow

I feel stranded all the time, lost
Without a home

I feel like I'm breathless, restless
In a dark hole.

I'm a little boy that's lost
And inside...

I lost my freedom

I lost my right

I lost my love ones and family

And I lost my mind,

I'm lost in a place that can't get out
Of, that's called the system.

As I sit here behind these four walls

Looking out my window and asking

Myself what could I do to stop

Coming in here.

The life I chose was to gangbang
For money, pain and hate...

I lost my mom and dad so I started
Using drugs to stop the pain inside.

I looked up to my homeboys to find

A roll model. But I started wrong

I robbed people for hate...

I ended up doing time up state.

I love females, but I'm always doing time

As the time go by. I wonder why

I know I been through a lot of stuff

Throughout my life from drugs to guns

Places to places I think it's enough

I got to rest. It's time

To put up the gloves and call it a

Rest.



NORBERTO "SHAGGY" PINE, JR.

All you long time counselors in the San Francisco Juvenile Justice Center know this next writer. He damn near grew up in juvenile hall. We at The Beat met him as a 12 year old many years ago, and he remained housed in juvenile hall on and off until he was 18. Today Shaggy is 20 something years old. We see him occasionally when he stops by our office to say hello or to use the computer. Shaggy wrote this piece from his apartment in San Francisco. This is probably the longest piece he has ever written for us and we are honored to share it with you all.

True Story of When I Was Locked Up

I was 12 when I got put into the Juvenile Hall for breaking my mom's nose. It was hard being away from my family at that age but I was in and out until I was 18.

Thanks to Street Soldiers and Dr. Joseph Marshall, I've been out for 5 years now.

I work with Muni Security on the buses. I also volunteer with the SFPD on some events and help with the Christmas Toy Drives they have for the kids in the City. I work with other people as well. I'm now the manager of a laundry mat in the City and make \$15 per hour.

You youngstas can do the same if you stay out when you get out. You youngstas can do a lot with your lives rather than going in and out of the system. You youngstas can do a lot of stuff with your lives rather than being in a gang or being in lock up. Get good jobs. Make money legally instead of illegally, which will only get you locked up again and again.

Does America Really Want What They Think They Want, After The War Is Over?

America and it's people should not expect America to resume its prestige after ending "this" war. I'm not a holy fanatic, however I do study scripture (Bible and Quran), and my way of life Islam without bias toward any other belief system. So as a reflection on the book that most Americans have faith in (The Holy Bible). I will use it to clarify a point in an attempt to give an understanding of what to expect.

Bible, Dan. 9:26,27..."and at the end of the war desolations desolate." Reflecting upon America, after a war such as this, do not expect the great recovery economically/ or mentally to America, but we should expect it to get even worse for America. It must be understood that these are signs of the direction the government is headed and it will become clearer as we continue in this writing.

Why should it get worse for America and why would I say that being a American? This truth does not mean I am anti-America. It's just simple facts of the rise and fall of government done in the natural order of things. (Karma so to say). With trying to find a job for the unemployed soldiers who are returning from the war zone (if they have a chance to return after this war) this will be one of the worse problems for the government it has ever received, especially under the economical crisis the country is facing. For America has no trade power except for its cross-national product. Which is why the oil is so important to seize in this war (not to say that it's right to take from someone else) but the oil can be used to sustain the power of the American dollar. If one has not already noticed that the American dollar is losing its power all over the world. Every country needs oils for multiple purposes.

As observed by many, America will not succeed in seizing that oil. And with unemployment mounting so fast, it will create revolution. And everyone will want to divide the government up into pieces and every leader will want to grab a piece, for their part to pattern after his own way of thinking.

This should be a big warning to African-Americans. Desolation... if we are going to suffer deprivation in a country that has been the pride of the nations, this will make it altogether worse, for everybody will be thinking about the way that they used to live, and the illusions of freedom and privileges that they used to have. The lost of that will make anger rise up in the nation, especially in those who feel they're better than the nation, especially in those who feel they're better than of the less fortunate, for their greed goes deeper than one can muster the words to express.

The desolation that is to be determined to be poured on the most desolate, is aimed directly at the place we live if one can read the signs of the time. All one has to mainly realize is that America is locked into an un-winnable war, however there is a solution to this problem, but will America accept the solution, is the question. Which, I will explain later.

The way to hasten the desolation is to confuse the heads of government. We seen this has already been put into motion. The confusion comes from not being able to solve the problems the nations face, for the solving of this problem will determine the future of the nation. If the problem cannot be solved, that means that the nation will head toward a bigger war, which will lead to a major catastrophe World Wide. We can see that the government is confused and cannot find away out at the same time saving its prestige among the other nations. The confusion itself for it never will because too many lies has been told and no one wants to own up. They all play ignorant as if they were fooled. They where not fooled in anything except for the

We welcome this first time writer in Christopher Blanks who delivers a hard-hitting commentary about the war we are in overseas. He shares his thoughts on what he thinks to expect once this war comes to some kind of conclusion for the USA and how it will effect the American people, particularly African Americans. Christopher Blanks writes from Telachapi State Prison in Telachapi, CA.

outcome. Now they have confused themselves as to what to do to save the nation.

Is it a confused time of the government to which the citizens should look to for guidance? How can the head guide, if it is not at peace with itself? The people seem to not be able to figure out why the foreign countries in the Middle East are reluctant towards America. I mentioned above that there is a solution. And everyone regrets talking about the bad news that is apparently coming, natural disasters/ economic crisis/high crime rates/mortgage crisis/ increasing corruption in politics/ etc. Not many people know that many countries are looking at the condition of African-Americans & Indians in the country that has been the pride of the nations and has been wax rich for so long that poverty should have long been eradicated in this nation.

They want to know why in the very heart of democracy does such a condition exist. They pick up books and read about the barbaric history against those people who are now in poverty in America and they see that, as an example of what America wants to do to them. They know a lot more than America thinks they know about America. Before the world court when the president was trying to gain U.N. support for the war in Iraq against his own people. People know the talk of him practicing genocide against his own people in Iraq just before the first Persian Gulf War, not many American people know that the president became under fire about the same practices in America against the Indians & African-Americans on crimes against humanity.

What can America do to save itself? The great American government knows the source of its problems world wide, however it does not wish to tell the masses. Many may call this subject promoting racism, however it cannot be called a lie. So to call it racism would only be an excuse to avoid the facts, for to throw racism at the front of the matter instead of the facts have long been a very successful strategy of those who do not want to talk about the truth, for in truth, someone always gets burned and exposed. The root of America's problems is dealing with African-America and the Native American. They both must receive real justice in order for America to progress forward.

To show that America wants real piece around the world and true democracy, it must first show that it wants the very same thing truly for its own citizens, mainly African-Americans and the Indian population, for those two groups of people where the ones denied REAL democracy in America. If the African-Americans so chose to form their own state like the Jews in Israel, would America oppose to it? Most probably could without thinking twice give a true affirmative answer to that question. Yes they would oppose to it.

What proof do we have of that answer? Upon reading history of the American way, check out Tulsa Oklahoma's history "Black Wall Street," the Marcus Garvey movement, Noble Drew Ali's movement, the Honorable Elijah Muhammed and the Nation of Islam movement and see how America dealt with them even though we are still blessed to have strong leaders who represent them all today. The problem also lies in the fact that Black people think the struggle ended with the civil rights movement as though Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream has been fulfilled for the benefit of us all. Well we can see that it hasn't been fulfilled for the benefit of us all. Well we can see that it hasn't because we are still fighting a racist system.

Young Thugs and Our Daughters

Tonight as I waited in San Francisco to catch a BART train home I witnessed something I am compelled to share with you. I must tell you it challenged me in ways I still reflect upon as I write this. I imagine I will consider the situation even further in the coming weeks. My eyes have been opened wider to a reality we rarely want to consider, or that we rather think does not apply to those around us.

A train had pulled up and as soon as the doors opened the quiet station was awakened to the voices of two arguing people. I was down a ways and my attention was drawn to the commotion. I walked slowly in the direction of the raised voices and could see everyone around the two – a young thug and his young girlfriend – stood frozen, watching the fiasco. Nobody moved, it was as though everyone there wished they were somewhere else. The train the two had gotten off left the station for its next destination and much of the background noise dissipated.

The two were going at it. He attempted to walk away but, not wanting to be ignored, she following him step-for-step, shouting a litany of expletives that did nothing to quell the discord. He turned on her and then they were face-to-face exchanging the most demeaning, belittling, and disrespectful words two people should never hurl at one another.

No one intervened, no one moved towards him or her. It was as if everyone now wished to become invisible. I took a step forward, wanting to see more clearly what my mind was processing to be sure it was not imagined.

I heard him say to her (but in much harsher words) he had bought the very shoes she was wearing so shut the **** up. She did not. I saw him push her to the raised structure commonly found in the BART stations for seating and then forcefully take one shoe – then the other – off her feet. He threw the shoes across the station and onto the tracks. At that point she went quiet.

He raised his hand. I recall thinking, "Surely he's not doing this. Surely this isn't happening." She sat there, head bowed and still. He bent down and said something no one else could hear in her ear. He raised himself up, standing there now two feet taller than her seated and small frame. And then he punched her squarely in the face.

No one moved an inch. I found myself closing the gap between the two. Fifty feet and counting down...

She sat there recovering from her shame and embarrassment, and from being so completely immobilized by this young thug, her bearing slowly awakening to what had just happened.

He began to walk backwards away from her. I heard him say to her, "I'm going to shoot you. You wait till I see you again, I'm going to shoot you."

That's when I stopped moving. In that moment I had my wake-up call. In that moment I was forced to evaluate what my instincts had advised my body to do by walking towards the two. In that moment I had to stop and allow my

The other day a dear colleague forwarded this piece to The Beat Within and asked if we were interested in publishing in our latest issue. After reading this moving yet painful piece, we couldn't resist the offer. We were honored when we heard that author Dedoced Habi agreed to allow us to print his latest commentary, which he wrote somewhere in the Bay Area. We do hope to hear from our new friend, if not, all we can say is thanks for this priceless piece of work that fits nicely in our important publication.

logic to lead the way, and not my compassion for these two unfortunate youth.

How is it that these two could act out so violently and callously towards one another in the presence of so many strangers? What were they thinking of and what could have been so powerful to each of them that they could lose sight of all the people who surrounded them?

I decided I would go no further. I decided their fate was cast and they had each chosen to be who they are. I decided my life was far too valuable - to me and to my loved ones – risk losing it on this night. "I'm going to shoot you..." reverberated in my mind and brought the reality of what our society has allowed to be wroth upon our youth.

No one else moved. There were no BART police in sight. There were no caring parents to protect that young girl. There was no responsible father to awaken the virtue and integrity that I know still exists in the mind of that young thug. There was no community of caring and nurturing adults to intervene on behalf of both of these youth... there was nothing.

My train came moments later and I boarded it. I seated myself and thought about how that young lady might have felt. I wondered how defenseless and minute she must have felt knowing she could be treated so badly in public, around so many people, without any help at all. I could now understand how so many young women feel these terrible young thugs own them. And I wondered how that young man could have arrived at such a corrupt mental state that he could act as he did. I wondered, and I wondered...

And then I realized the truth of the matter. They acted the way they did because we are paralyzed by fear, self preservation, insensitivity, a collective disregard for community, and many other intricately woven variables, all working to keep us at bay.

It is my prayer that no one who reads this has a son or daughter who would act as such. I would wish that hurt, shame and embarrassment on no one.

I have chosen to share this with you because we need to start talking to all youth who might act out in these ways and help them learn another way. When you next visit with friends or family and you hear our youth talk about how cool it is to be a thug, or how safe it is to be with a thug, I hope you will remember what I have shared with you. I hope you will find the daring to say something that will plant the seed of change in the minds of the youth you can influence.

And I hope you never have to deal with the trauma our young thugs are inflicting on our daughters.

The Beat Within

My Search For Freedom

It's like I'm in the dark bleeding on my knees pleading to God for a lost freedom I never had. And yeah, mama always told me "boy be careful what you ask for," but I wonder why pain didn't tell her that when she had me! For this life I didn't ask for and this pain isn't suppose to be mine. Is it a must that I be stabbed in the heart every minute of the day, on life support breathing from a body that need to pay its water bill. For it bled more than it suppose to.

Damn! Sometimes I wish I didn't even know what pain is, but this life left me no choice. It was forced upon me, now I feel like a kidnapped victim abducted from my paradise of freedom and thrown behind bars, fighting to breathe in an intoxicated environment and it feels like I'm being suffocated with a gas mask and I can feel the invisible tears escape from my eyes like a never ending waterfall.

Every night I close my eyes and go to sleep I dream of being at home and the nightmares don't stop until the next morning when my eyes are open again. It seems like my only freedom comes when my eyes are closed dreaming of that which isn't even a reality. Its like I'm in hell and my only escape in through death. These heat waves of struggle got me hallucinating as if I was in the desert, thirsty for water, choking on dirt. Dehydration got me wondering if I'm ever going to find freedoms water or will this desert's cancer eventually consume my body leaving me slumped on the back of a camel.

This drama got me desperate reaching out to a goal only time will permit, and that's freedom whether it's through life or death. Sometimes I feel like I'm on death row waiting for my number to be called experiencing every kind of emotion there is to experience. Lord, I've been in critical for some time now. Why won't they just pull the cord and take this pain away? Is it a must to die in agony seeking to kill those for not killing me? All I want to do is live but if I got to die before process was to start, take a picture of me living in between suicide and homicide like two pistols on my left and right. Save the flowers. Write on the tombstone, "he lived by the gun, he died by the gun".

I can't remember the last time I fought this hard to be free and that's because I never had. Realization tell me each time I stumbled upon incarnation it has become that much more difficult to regain that balance of freedom. Either my shoes are untied and I need to be laced or I've been rejecting

The next writer that you're about to hear from is a long time friend of ours and his name is Eric Phillips aka E-Money. E-money is currently locked down in Folsom State Prison, In Represa, Ca, doing a three-year bid, but is scheduled to be released soon, within the next couple of months. For all you that don't know E-Money, he's a very intelligent and skilled writer. He's very good at putting his thoughts down on paper, nothing but game. He has been through the system since he was a youngsta, just like the majority of you writers for The Beat Within. Now he's spitting some knowledge to all you young readers and old alike, 'cause we can never stop learning in life. What the next man know, you might not know. We all can learn from one another. So peep game!

common sense telling me that one day I'm going to fall and I'm not going to get back up. I guess I better look where I'm going or become a victim to this hard knock life.

Never in my life I sought change so desperate and it isn't because the fear of incarceration. Mama always told me "fear no men or nothing, but god." But my appetite has been disgusted with his life I lead and if I could I would regurgitate it back to the scum of this earth, for I have experienced so much B.S. It was like I was living in a manure factory, kissing behind just to get by. I now realize I have been living according to someone else predetermined theory of how the average young black male will suffice (turn out) in America instead of competing in the struggle for my highest potential and being of contrary to statistics.

The man in me tell me that I'm one of kind diamond that exceeds the limits of materialism, but as impossible to be this world's greatest gift until I stop the devil's shadow from taking my shine away. He has been giving me rainy days of pain and I've been running from his confrontations of struggle not realizing that by over coming them is the only way to experience the essence of freedom.

I wonder why it took me two breaths away from death in a dungeon of an illusive mind frame seeing my reflection through my eyes of reality and uninvited burning tears to before I realized how much I desired to live and be free. Must pain burn my heart before my eyes are open! I guess you can say I had it all figured out living in a dream that was meant to stay in my head.

My conclusion, I've been living a life walking through the shadow of death searching for a graveyard of pain, thinking I'm going to find heaven through a casket. My rebellious attitude was my shovel and my destructive action was the dirt burying me closest to hell. I was a funeral waiting to happen hoping that freedom was of my attendance.

KEITH SMITH

Looking Back

To all of the struggling youth out there, if you are in juvenile hall, CYA or in an after-school workshop: A lot of us look back at how it could have been – "if only I would have done this or did that, it would all be different. I could be at home watching TV or even studying for a test or something else."

Just stop and take a look around wherever you are just for a minute. Now tell yourself, "Wow! I did this, but this is not the end because I still have choices in my life." If you are anything like me, I believe it's time to change by making positive choices in my life.

It's truly sad that we can't rewind the time, but we can start today by being a better person and learning how to ask for help from a friend or one of your parents, even your PO sometimes. That's what it takes when you want to start

From Keith Smith, writing in from CA Rehab Center, Norco, CA. Keith is from East Palo Alto and has been in the system for many years. He hopes to parole back to his community and become involved in teaching young people what he's learned by his years of incarceration.

living right. You may even have to tell the homies that you have to start "doing you" and not the street. People respect you when you come to them straight up and they see you are for real about changing.

Yes, it's true. Life is really cool when you're living right because you can be yourself and kind to the people around you and feel good about it. Yes, it would be really cool if we could rewind the time and walk a straight line but we can't. So we just have to start walking that straight and become a better person. Remember: our past doesn't have to be our future!

*But he laughs to keep from crying
 Sightless, unaware that his people are dying*

Dear Beat Within

One can only respect what it is you do to help the lost souls, the young as well as the grown. I sent you a letter to see what it was that your organization was into. Your office sent me a copy of your weekly newsletter. I like what you're doing for the youth. Do I have to pay to receive your newsletter?

I myself do a little writing as well as drawing. I'm sending you just something small that the young you help might be able to relate to. If you use any of it for your newsletter, could you send me the one you put it in?

I'm from the East Coast and on a little different vibe, so I don't know if our slang would be looked at as being watered down. But I got a way of getting' my point across.

I'm doing life plus 50 years for robbery and murder. I've been down for 8 years now. I left behind a beautiful daughter and a bunch of good people. My life is real, my story is raw in its purest form. I hold no punches.

If I hear back from you or not, it's been real. Keep up the good work and even though it is tough at times, it gets greater later.

The Beat welcomes Charles "Yashir" Linton, who is incarcerated in a facility in LaBelle, Pennsylvania. We encourage you to read his "Dear Beat Within" letter/intro. It gives us readers plenty to think about. To answer your question Charles, you do not have to pay for The Beat Within. With each letter we receive we send you or anyone for that matter our publication. We look forward to getting educated on the East Coast lifestyle and slang, bring it on pure and uncut! Thanks for sharing the powerful "Laugh Now, Die Later," wow!

Laugh Now, Die Later

Laughing and crying is symbolic to laughing and dying
 Consequences of packin' the iron

The hood he was raised in, his safe haven
 Where cats pump crack and keep k's blazin'

Young dudes thinking guns rule
 Feeling like the streets teach 'em better than some school

Lost souls who cross goals with immediate gratification
 Hit the block, pitchin' rocks, 'till they back at the station

Post bail or sit a few
 Bump heads with different dudes with different views
 It's so redundant

But it's the cards he was dealt
 And the scars that he felt
 That leave him closed minded and so blinded
 But he laughs to keep from crying
 Sightless, unaware that his people are dying

*I left behind a beautiful daughter
 and a bunch of good people.*

CLINTON AVALOS

The following was sent in by Clinton Avalos, who writes from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Clinton's letter is quite touching. We appreciate his feedback and his own thoughts as a writer. By the way, "Formula For Success" is a super read, we hope all you Beat readers enjoy Clinton's latest as well.

Dear Beat

Hello, how are you doing today? I hope just fine. It's a good feeling to see the poems I've written in The Beat for the young ones to read. I'd feel like I've accomplished something if it were to just touch one soul. It really does matter that much to me.

I know a lot of the kids are uncertain about what the future holds for them, just like I was when I was at their age. It's taken me a lot of working on myself to rid me of the dysfunctional attitudes and character defects that I've carried into my adult life from my young rebellious life.

Now in my life I've learned the importance of what it means to have to be willing to do whatever it takes to change, to learn from mistakes, and to keep focused on the end result - which at this moment is "me." I've learned to love myself unconditionally in a world that offers absolutely no guarantees. When I did this is when I started to learn to love myself and others as well.

Part of this learning experience is what has taken me to want to start working on an A.A. in Social Sciences, while incarcerated. Through that experience I wrote this poem called "The Formula for Success." I hope you could use it for The Beat.

Formula For Success

The formula for success is to stay in school
 Get an education and be cool

It doesn't matter where you're at or where you've been
 Just keep on trying again and again

Something worth having is worth all the more
 It's what they call dreams, that's worth fighting for
 It's up to the individual the decisions we make

Don't hold out the promise of empty gains
 Life is an investment, invest in yourself
 Wisdom and knowledge is great wealth

It's not all or nothing, life's not a pursuit to have fun
 Deny yourself, pick up your cross and pray to the Almighty One

Learning is fun when you put your mind to the test
 Keep your blinders on, forget the rest
 Stay focused and on track

Fake it till you make it, do whatever it takes
 Always count the cost; it's your life that's great
 When it looks gloomy and hope is hard to hold onto
 Remember always - you can do it!



Play My Heart Like a Piano

Play my heart like a piano for all eternity
 Oh, play the precious keys that bring forth liberty
 Play them at dawn for the awakening of my soul
 Oh, play them at dusk when the thin sheets fold
 Play them when all obstacles of life are against me
 Oh, play them when I overcome all my adversities
 Play them when the Earth crumbles, producing a
 catastrophic disaster
 Oh, play them when the medicine cures the cancer
 Play them when you're happy and full of joy
 Oh, play them when you expect a girl but receive a boy
 Play them in the company of a king who has just been
 crowned
 Oh, play the keys of soul soothing sound

*Loving you is like finding
 salvation for my soul*

The Torn Lover

It's been five long years, her heart he is yet to discover
 Seems like five decades to the torn lover
 Looking back on time past the love they shared he'd do
 anything to make last
 Even murder in the first degree obsessed as he could be
 angry and on a mission
 He makes a catastrophic decision to get her back dead
 or alive Satan reinforces his drive
 His hand on gun his mind on death/she will soon take
 her last breath
 The time has come time to meet her maker, he
 considers himself the ultimate time taker
 Two lives balance in the beam then he thinks should I
 give her a break
 Confused his own life he takes

Our Love

Our love reunited like the four winds of the night
 I love you with unconditional love with all my might
 No, there are no flaws in you because you are perfection
 I have learned much from you, so I count you as a
 blessing
 In you I found everything I've been looking for
 You are everything I ever wished for and so much more
 You preoccupy my mind now and forever
 You are the perfect woman for me, you couldn't get any
 better
 The sun highlights your ebony eyes and your blessed
 charm
 Your beauty inspires me, it inspired me to write this
 poem
 Our love is more than candlelight dinners and costly
 champagne
 Even if we didn't have this lavish lifestyle our love would
 remain the same.

Yes indeed, our new friend Curtis Cook is what we now call a regular contributor. This week he has more poems to share with us. Curtis, keep up the writing...your work shows a depth of emotion. The poem "Alex" was written about and for his son on the day he was born. "I Am the Ghost of Smoke" was written to encourage people to stop smoking or to not begin in the first place. "Play My Heart Like a Piano" was written for his younger brother, Kadaris, who plays the piano, as well as other instruments. It was written to encourage him to keep playing. "Play on, play on!" Plus, Curtis has graced us with several more poems in this issue, including his favorite love poem, guess which one that is? Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings with us! Curtis Cook Jr. writes us from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama.

Alex

April the first blessed with an eight pound fifteen
 ounce son
 At eight forty eight p.m. heaven's birth cycle was done.
 Coming in at twenty-one and a half inches long
 I can hear angels singing a baby has been born.
 I will name him Alex because he is great to me
 Put him on a pedestal for the whole world to see
 When I look in his eyes I can see myself
 Lord, give him a great start and most importantly
 spiritual wealth
 And let not the sun go down without him saying his
 prayers
 Let him know when I'm gone his true Father will be
 there
 I want you to know your father was a man of true talent
 To my baby, I love you, Alex!

Loving You

Loving you is like catching that first breath as a
 drowning victim
 Loving you is like eating my favorite dish from Mom's
 kitchen
 Loving you is like finding salvation for my soul
 Loving you is the one thing in my life that will never get
 old
 Loving you is like a cool breeze on a hot summer's day
 Loving you is speechless in which I don't have the words
 to say
 Loving you is like a rose's dependency on April's rain
 Loving you is the loving emotion that keeps me sane
 Loving you is like the precious leaves of fall
 Loving you is the most zealous gift of all
 Loving you is how I found love in everything
 Loving you is a graceful action that I can't explain
 Loving you is like fame with endless wealth
 Loving you is a necessity because I love you to death.

I Am the Ghost of Smoke

I am the Ghost of Smoke
 I live a cloudy life in your lungs and throat
 I'll raise your blood pressure and I'll cause cancer
 I've left the best doctors in the world without an answer
 I'll raise your insurance premiums
 I'll make in your face wrinkles of demons
 I'll make you cough and short of breath
 I'll snatch back your good health
 I'll explore your body when you inhale me
 I'll cause problems and sickness to many
 I'll stain your teeth and give you the breath of death
 I'll drain your body until there's nothing left.

Detail Love

For the love of a woman passed throughout all the earth
 Special in the sight of man it runs deep without hurt
 Her love is like no other
 Somewhat like the love of your dearest mother
 Her heart is full of unconditional love
 She's never two-faced, a love you can trust
 A love that you can lean on when you're sick and can't get well
 Remaining faithful to her man while he is away in jail
 Stimulating each other's needs though rapid heart beats and sweat
 You can't live without her, that's something you can bet
 As your spirits intertwine two hearts reaching that certain elevation
 An image emerges with a dramatic illustration
 Acting as a joiner to join two souls unto one
 Being fruitful and multiplying, God's will has been done.



My Valentine

My valentine, tell me why I love you so much
 Is it because of your beauty or your soul-touching touch
 Is it possible for me to love you more than I love myself
 My valentine, it's true because I love you to death
 Is it because of love my heart quivers whenever you're near
 Is it you, darling, that absorbs all thoughts of fear
 My valentine, you are my angel and keeper of my sanity
 Is it women like you that preserve humanity
 Is it love, my valentine, when I can't keep my eyes off you
 My love this true, one like you never knew
 Is it you, my love, who's always full of joy and deep compassion
 Is it you, my darling, who never demonstrates a negative reaction
 My love, you are all these things and so much more
 It's women like you that are worthy of unlocking Heaven's door

My Childhood Love

As a child I always admired your compassionate tendencies
 All at once I was overtaken by your striking beauty
 Your eyes sway like the emerald green grass of Alabama
 Oh, your skin is like the softest mink coat of Canada
 The great love city of Paris couldn't tame your angel-like presence
 You're so beautiful to me, consider me star struck from Heaven
 All the world's history of beautiful women can't even compare
 Your beauty surpasses them by billions with a million to spare
 Sweet sounds of the violin complement you in your attractive scarlet dress
 The symphony plays, "The Most Beautiful Girl I Ever Met"
 As we look to the sky our eyes are filled with white doves
 This moment I will never forget, my childhood love

Smooth Sailing

Smooth sailing with loving you on my mind
 I can't forget the first time your lips touched mine
 Baby, if this was a sinful thing, I don't want to let go
 Your love is the power that navigates my soul
 And when I'm feeling low, you brighten my day
 You are a master wordsmith 'cause you know just what to say
 Cover me with your love, your loving arms of grace
 Teach and keep me warm in your tender love of faith
 Hold me close like you never held another
 Love me to the third degree under the covers
 Tap your fingertips up and down my spine
 Whisper softly in my ear to let me know you're mine
 And this is what I want to do for the rest of my life
 Making sweet love to you, sailing off into the night

Two Faces

I am a man of two faces, but with two faces I am one
 I am two faces because of self, but I gaze at you with one

Diamond Gem Love

Delicate skin tones with a flirtatious body
 Working miracles in the spirit of naughty
 Jasper gems decorate the entity exquisitely
 The distinguished beauty takes the breath of me
 Never thought I'd meet the one to die for
 Her soft tender touch is one I can't ignore
 As we ravish each other rigorously
 Fatigued sweaty bodies bring us to our knees
 Weeping exists in this hellish love storm
 The bond was mutual that grew systematically warm
 Being creatures of a habitual nature
 I bring forth diamonds, emeralds and rubies with intentions to take her
 As we interconnect our spirits agree in vast similarities
 Exhausted but in love my spirit is free

I Wish...

I wish there were muddy tracks on the floor
 And a door going shut with a slam.
 I wish there were thumb marks all over the door
 And a hole in our pot of jam.
 I wish there were tops and toys to fix,
 A broken windowpane,
 A little old wagon and worn-out sled
 Out in the storm and rain.
 I wish there were little shoes to tie;
 A few little scrapes, bruises and bumps to kiss;
 A little boy to put in school
 For never a day dare he miss.
 I wish there were little boys to beg
 For money, candy or pie;
 I wish the cookie jar would travel off
 The pantry shelf on the sly.
 But the days of these pranks and tasks are gone,
 The days with such care's oppressed;
 There's a heartache that only a father could own,
 When the young birds have all flown the nest;
 A longing that only parents ever know,
 A longing that's never guessed-
 When loving hearts in a young manhood's glow
 Are planning for a father to rest.
 No thought of memories of olden times
 Have my boys, grown so big and strong-
 Memories that come like sweet vesper chimes
 Of the times when life was a song.
 They know not the hours that most times are spent
 (They guess not, these grown-up boys)
 That father is silently looking o'er
 A box of their old-worn-out toys.
 Or you can blame me or wonder instead
 If I long for these old-time joys-
 In longing for the years to turn back again
 In times past when these were "just dads little boys"!

Look who is back! Yes it's our friend Herbert Schweigert, from Crossroad Correctional Center in Cameron, Missouri, who has contributed more for publication. Herbert, your work hits it on the button! May your good Lord keep inspiring you!



The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak
 At the funeral of a friend.
 He referred to the dates on her tombstone
 From the beginning to the end.
 He noted that first came the date of her birth
 And spoke of the second with tears,
 But he said that what mattered most of all
 Was the dash between those years.
 For the dash represents all the time
 That she spent alive on earth
 And now only those who loved her
 Know what that little line is worth.
 For it matters not how much we own,
 The cars, the house, the cash,
 What matters is how we live and love
 And how we spend our dash.
 So think about this long and hard,
 Are there things you'd like to change?
 For you never know how much time is left
 You could be at the "dash mid-range!"
 If we could just slow down enough to consider
 What's true and what's real
 And always try to understand
 The way other people feel.
 And be less quick to anger
 And show appreciation more
 And love the people in our lives
 Like we've never loved before.
 If we treat each other with respect
 And more often wear a smile
 Remembering that this special dash
 Might only last a little while.
 So, when your eulogy is being read
 With your life's actions to rehash...
 Would you be pleased with the things they have to say
 About how you spent your dash?

Dear Addiction

How are you old friend, enemy, hater, liar, cheat - all of the above and some. It's been a while since I've been graced or should I say disgraced with your cunning, baffling, powerful presence. You had me fooled through so many tears. I wish I could relieve all those drugs, and alcohol induced wasted years, but since I can't I won't even try. Now I know life is worth living and I don't wish to die (anymore).

You lose, I'm in control and have a real good hold. You know there are a few things I have to say now that I'm stronger, bolder and badder: I'm not going under 'cause bang He came to me just like thunder. My higher power that is and this time as I walk away from you is forever-That's all I have to say. Don't bother waiting for me because after I shut the door on you there's no turning back like I've done before. I'm His child now, hard to the core.

My only prayer is for all those hearts your still gonna break.

But me and my friends- the ones you have no control or power over anymore- we will be waiting to catch the ones that fall from your grasp. So take this and do what you will, I'll never be one of those you kill.

Anonymously Yours,
 An Ex-Addict

The Gift Of Life

The gift if life is ours today,
 To mold and shape like blocks of clay.
 Each day unveils an open door,
 That wasn't open there before.
 The gift of life is ours today,
 To use before it ticks away.
 Like sand within an hourglass,
 For this day too is soon to pass.
 Our yesterdays have all been spent,
 They can't be saved or sold or lent .
 The gift of life is ours today,
 To worship, work, or rest and play.
 The hours pass so quickly by,
 We sometimes laugh and sometimes cry.
 There is so much we need to do,
 If we would have a dream come true.
 Who knows which day will be our last,
 Before it fades into the past!
 Our time is precious, come what may-
 The gift of life is ours today.

It is Better

To set a good example than to preach the finest sermon
 To be noted for living a pure life than to be admired for singing well
 To be called a fanatic by the world than to be its friend and a willful hypocrite at heart
 To be evil spoken of than to hear everybody speak well of you
 To please God than to please your friends
 To obey God than to backslide
 To have a conscience void of offense toward God than to be on good terms with the world
 To have a crown in Heaven than a place on earth
 To give God all the glory than to take any of it yourself
 To do one thing well than to partly do several things
 To have 30 minutes of private prayer than to have 30 minutes of useless conversation
 To work for the salvation of souls than to seek to please yourself
 To love God and own nothing in this world than to be rich and lift up your eyes in hell.

ISH

We do not know Ish, or do we? We bet our colleague Dennis Morton who conducts Beat workshops in Santa Cruz Juvenile Hall does. Well, unfortunately, Ish writes us from the county jail in Santa Cruz, CA. We'll let his letter to The Beat and short poem speak for us, for him. We definitely hope to hear more from Ish down the road!

CISCO

We welcome back to our pages Cisco. Cisco writes his latest poem, "All Washed Up" from the RJ Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA. He has been locked up for many years, we do hope there is a release date for Cisco in the near future.

Dear Beat

Allow me to extend my utmost profound love and respect. Hoping and wishing all who read this find themselves in a golden state of mind and upright spirits. I'm a long time contributor to The Beat Within and since I find myself once again behind the walls, I would like to pick up where I left off.
 Here's a little poem I wrote. Hope you like it.
 I look forward to receiving a copy of The Beat if it's not too much trouble. I feel I can bring a lot of good stuff to your magazine.

Dear Beat

Hello to you all! Here we come upon another week as well as a new month! It's now coming up thirteen years in CDCR - what a joy! I'm sending another poem for you all to enjoy. Thanks again. God bless and may the angels watch over you all.

In My Cell

Once again I sit here all alone
 Just to open my eyes and see the steel and the stone
 Out my cell window I see rain from the sky
 Just to realize it was a tear from my eye
 I feel the cold air chill me down to the bone
 I'm forced to stay here but this cell is not my home
 I hear the ring, the metal swinging of key and metal locks
 The scrape of boots upon concrete as guards patrol the cat walks
 Another passing day as a CDC prisoner doing time
 I got nothing to lose by my sleep
 A gangster dreaming of love creeps down to my feet
 A thug in love only has one destination
 To reminisce on a kiss could only be by imagination
 My girl swore she would wait and never be late
 But Sancho came along and she left me from the gate
 Please accept my calls, the blessing from your voice can't penetrate these walls
 With a piece of paper and envelope infatuated with ink
 The walls and locks got you wondering what can a gangster like me do
 It's all a struggle for what you don't see
 Like the song says, somebody please
 But I had a choice and I chose wrong
 My love for you runs deep through my heart
 I want you by my side
 Girl, you're my pride
 I'm down for you with a passion

All Washed Up

The floods of many waters do take their toll
 When the mighty billows of trials overwhelm the soul
 "You're finished, all washed up," the enemy does cry
 "There is nothing left, all is lost," you sigh
 Then comes the Commander of wind and sea and says,
 "My child, look unto me, you are washed up, 'tis true
 But understand what this means for you
 Once you were lost in sin's miry clay
 You had no hope and could not find your way
 Then you sought my cleansing within
 And now you're all washed up from sin
 Sailing along, clouds gathered and winds did blow
 Expectation's vessel tore apart and sank below
 Buoyed up by my sustaining grace
 You held tightly to a board of faith
 Days passed, you and your fragment drifted
 You were lonely, humbled and sifted
 Touched by your Shepherd's rod, at the mercy of no one but God
 Not finished, He sent yet another storm
 'I can't make it,' you cried, 'I'm too weary and worn'
 You rode through the endless night on death's dark door
 But by morning you were all washed up on a new shore
 Though ripped apart, withered and suffering loss
 You did survive, being tempted and tossed
 All washed up to start over anew
 Convinced that I, your good Captain, will see you through
 When gasping for breath, at the end of your rope,
 Just remember that as long as there is life, there is hope"

A Lesson Back at Ya

Lessons come in many different shapes and sizes. I could be doing something unconsciously for years and one day, like an epiphany, bam!

The other day a friend of mine, Ace, was telling me a story from an incident which happened a few months earlier. You see, Ace, a life long Cowboys fan, always cheered his team on. And rightfully so. They're America's team; they have great players, great coaches, great cheerleaders, and they're deep in the heart of Texas.

Well, Ace cheered and cheered. The Cowboys were winning and on a roll. Life was seeming a little better to Ace. On Monday morning, after a Cowboy win, the sun seemed to shine just a bit brighter.

Did you know, there are some people in this world that can only find happiness in other people's misery? There are. They're everywhere.

So Ace is cheering and this other dude, Strife, can't stand it. Now, Strife, in all reality, was indifferent to the Cowboys and he didn't necessarily dislike Ace. What he didn't like was the joy of others. Pathetic.

Well, one day, after an especially close game in which the Cowboys lost, Strife started mocking Ace's cheers. Ace, no dummy, knows that Strife didn't care about the other team's win, only that Ace was feeling bad. And Strife rubbed it in.

My friend Ace took that personally and was ready to fight. And if Strife didn't actually, in front of everyone on the yard, break it all the way down, that's what would have happened. Disregarding all the consequences that would have followed, Ace was ready.

I know for a fact that Ace would have regretted that and I said, "Man, you were ready to throw it all away over that?!"

He said, "Yeah, but..." this "And what if..." that and I had an answer for all of it. And do you know what? I was wrong. I was wrong and he showed me why. And I was about to say, "Yeah, but" or "And what if," but that was useless. So I said, "You know what, Ace? You're right and thank you for pointing that out to me."

So, there are two lessons to be learned here.

1.) You can't criticize someone for something when you yourself have faults; sometimes the same ones. That's hypocritical.

In this case, I tried to school Ace about letting pride get in the way of living a good clean life. Who cares what people say or think as long as they don't put their hands on you. "Yeah, but..." "Yeah, but nothing!"

2.) Everybody is full of pride and you sometimes have to swallow it. It's hard, but if you chew on it long enough, it will go down. Sitting down and thinking things through will help.

When I was talking to Ace, telling him he was wrong, he got mad. We all get angry when we are corrected. He waited a minute and pointed out that just days earlier someone anonymously yelled, "Shut up" while I was talking and, I, without thinking, came right back with "Screw you, coward..." and so on. I didn't even know who it was. But my pride got right in my mouth and came right out. I was well within my rights, but I was wrong. Why couldn't I just let that go? Pride.

I never tell anyone to shut up; why should I let someone tell me? Pride.

Jesus asked, in Luke 6:41, "...why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?..." Practice what you preach.

In conclusion, be mindful of your actions and reactions to others. Life is not a contest on who is toughest or who's right or wrong. I, myself, at forty-one, still need a mentor. I have to swallow my pride and listen. I have to take time to think about my actions, how they will affect others. But when I do mind myself, nobody else has to.

There are lessons to be learned everyday and every way. But you have to remove the stubborn pride to see the errors you make and be humble enough to admit when you're wrong.

Kevin McKay returns this week with his latest effort for us all to read. Kevin writes his prose and poetry for *The Beat* from the SHU (Security Housing Unit) in Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA writes. What follows are some examples of his powerful work. We can all learn from your lessons, Kevin! Read on Beat readers, read on!

You

A part of you cries in shame
 While another protests in anger.
 You know you should ask forgiveness,
 But pride stands in the way.

For every moment of sorrow
 Comes two of contempt.
 Grace and mercy try to work their way in,
 But greed and craving have a stronghold.

Who judges when all hate?
 Who denies forgiveness when all ask for mercy?
 Who condemns when all worship death?
 Who will release the bonded when all are in chains?

There Is One

There is one
 Given by One to save all.
 To save all and forgive all,
 To show mercy to all who ask.
 To release the chains which bind

There is one
 Worthy of judgment upon us
 Showing compassion
 Shedding His own blood
 To cleanse us from the poison of ours.
 Praise God.
 Give thanks.

This Love

Full of pride and anger in his heart, he slammed the door. It was a slam of finality, shaking the windows and eaves. He shoved his hands deep into his pockets; in one was half a cigarette he'd stubbed out earlier, the other the worn out Zippo lighter his grandfather had given him when he turned 18 and joined the army. It took six times to get it lit, but, as always, it faithfully did. He breathed in the stale tobacco as deep as possible, held it, and slowly released smoke from his nose.

She hated when he smoked. She hated a lot of the things he did. But she loved him anyway, loved him deeply, more than he could know or understand.

And he loved her.

He didn't know what the feeling was. It spooked him. He just knew that she was fragile. That's why he'd storm off and smoke in silence when she told him what he already knew. "Don't drink so much." "Don't smoke." "Don't sniff that crap up your nose." He knew.

Was it so selfish of her to want him to live a long life?

He threw the cigarette down on the driveway and rubbed it out with his boot. He picked it up, along with a few small pieces of trash the wind had blown onto the property, and walked them over to the trash can. He took a deep breath of fresh, crisp air and made his way back to the front of the house.

Something caught his eye in the dark sky and he looked over just in time to see a bright star, millions of miles away, shoot across the sky like a rocket. That made him smile. How could he see something so far away so clearly and be blind to the simple truth right in front of him? He smiled, turned and walked into the house and found her in the kitchen drying the last of the dinner dishes. "I love you," he said and he hugged her with all his might.

SUPERBUGS BEHIND BARS

It's called the "super bug," you know the "flesh-eating disease." The potentially fatal staph infection that wastes away at the skin, leaving in its wake hideous scars that remain forever.

Actually, that would be a fortunate consequence of the ailment, compared to those who've died. It's a frightening malady.

In October, a representative of the Journal of the American Association says deaths caused by the aggressive germ exceed that of AIDS.

Thirty-two infected people per 100,000. It's a plague on the move in society, and reports of its devastation are growing.

It's even worse for those enclosed, locked away in penal institutions across the continental horizon; staph is completely and utterly out of control. It is within these forsaken venues of gloom that diseases like staph thrive. Prisoners are particularly vulnerable due to nationwide overcrowding, where people live virtually on top of one another.

Unfortunately, society is often dispassionate about what goes on within. Very few realize that what festers on

We welcome back Dortell Williams from the California State Prison in Lancaster, CA. This week he drops us a commentary that should literally bug you. This concerning piece, "Superbugs Behind Bars" should definitely get you thinking about your health and of course where you could be heading, or have already headed. We look forward to Dortell's follow-up piece.

the inside oozes outside.

In California, for instances, sheriff's deputies were exposed to the flesh-eating disease. One deputy took it home to his newborn.

In 2003, about 200 prisoners a month were being infected, totaling a little over 9000 prisoners by year's end. That's just in the Los Angeles County Jail. In 2005, 129,000 prisoners. Nationwide, some 600,000 were released.

Does society have something to fear? You bet? "Corrections" facilities that do everything but correct. Think about it, if pervasive sub-cultures like sagging pants, lace less tennis shoes, racial disharmony and gang tensions can emanate from prisons, how much more contagious diseases?

Prisoners are no more than an extension of society. As the frequency of prison and social issues intertwine, it is becoming more evident that prisons are not America's panacea, but it's biting plague.

Very few realize that what festers on the inside oozes outside.

Hey There Kid

It's been some time since we've talked.

I see you're crying.

I know life is hard and prison sucks and I can tell inside you're sighing.

You're not afraid to bleed if the cause is good.

You're like a soldier on the line.

Your mind is like an M-16 with ammunition hard to find.

You wear the scars of battles fought tattooed beneath your skin.

And when you think you've lost, you don't give up and in the end, you really win.

Do you know why you're crying?

I know I do.

See I'm that voice inside your heart.

I'm that silent thing that guides your dreams to the light when times get dark.

I feed you hope to fight despair.

Without me you're bound to lose.

I can comfort body, mind, and soul, but only you can fill your shoes.

I can give advice about battle plans and how to shake that fear you feel.

But I can also guide you through fantasies when the pain becomes too real.

You've won and lost, stood tall and proud, never hung your head in shame.

You fought when only you stood alone with only me inside your brain.

Since you were born into this world you can trust that I was there.

Watched over you like parents do 'cause I'm a friend who really cares.

And believe this now I'm here with you all the way until the end.

I'm that thing you call a conscience, your one and only honest friend.

ROBERT C. SHINN

It's so nice to have the following piece from Robert C. Shinn, who wrote this from Salinas Valley State Prison in Salinas, CA. We do hope it is true what he says in the following letter, that he is home, free. We are touched that he has given us his favorite poem, "Hey There Kid." We definitely look forward to hearing from Robert in the free world. His words and his love to share speaks volumes.

Dear Beat

I know it's been awhile since I last wrote, but I've been getting ready for my upcoming release. I'm set to go home on February 26 if all goes right. I've been wanting to bless you guys with another little something, but really didn't know what to send since I have a big list of thoughts and poems. I've finally decided that I'll send a copy of a poem I've titled "Hey Kid." It's one of my favorite poems to read when I feel lost or depressed. I figure it's another poem that will help people get through the hard times. I wrote it as a letter to myself when I felt most alone in doing this term. I really had to search deep for these words, so I hope it helps someone out there reading it.

Thanks, Beat, for being the outlet I needed to relieve this stress and focus on doing my time. Believe that I will continue to send in works when I'm out in the world. Just because I'm out in the free world doesn't mean that my words can't help someone still trapped in a cell. Peace and respects.

Thanks, Beat, for being the outlet I needed to relieve this stress and focus on doing my time.

A New Generation Of Black

If Black are no longer Black and proud, and if they don't get goose pimples over Black being beautiful, there is a reason for that. That is because is a new breed of Black folks ascending upon today's world.

Don't be shocked because there are Black people who don't get involved in the Civil Rights Movement. That is because they never experienced the Civil Rights Movement.

Today, many Blacks didn't forget their history, it's just that they never knew it. The new generation of Blacks hasn't forgotten where they came from, as far as they know, they came from today's world.

We need to know and remember that millions of Black people have never known segregation in the nude. They have always attended integrated schools, lived in integrated neighborhoods and had friends from other races.

Eating places, movie theatres, hotels and motels, schools and opportunities have always been open to them. They know nothing or almost nothing about signs that read 'Black Only' or 'Whites Only'. They know nothing about the back door or the back seat on public transportation.

They have no real idea of police brutality, being attacked by vicious police dogs or being washed away by powerful water hoses.

The lack of this knowledge and experience has created a new breed of Black folks who are not very familiar with the age-old Black struggle.

This is why the teaching of Black History is more important today than ever before. Many Blacks today need to understand that many Black people suffered and died to prevent them from experiencing the weight of racism, segregation, injustices and denied opportunities.

The Civil Rights organization, the teaching of Black History and the Civil Rights Movement can no longer continue to do business as usual. Their strategies must be updated to meet the needs and to get the attention of the new generation of Black people.

Forty years ago, these strategies worked. They worked because no Black was removed from the struggles and evils of the things the Civil Rights Movement sought to cure. These people of today must be made to connect the dots between the past and the present in order to get the complete picture.

Once this is done, the new generation of Black folks will be able to understand that the battle is also theirs and that they need to get involved.

Our friend Shawn Montgomery delivers another stellar piece from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford Fla. It feels like it has been awhile since we last heard from Shawn, anyhow we are glad he hasn't forgotten us and The Beat remains on his radar. His following commentaries are no joke, they come from his experiences and what he observes and reads living the life inside day in and day out. We can't wait for the next installment!

When He Loves Him and She Don't Know

It's inevitable that when a man goes to prison, sometime during his bid he will be asked a question (either jokingly or with serious concern) about that state of his masculinity.

In some form or fashion somebody will try to figure out if he has engaged in the unnatural act of "man on man" fornication. They usually come indirectly.

Women disguised their intent and ask questions like: "What do you do for sex;" or "do you get horny in there?" Because most women feel they know a man's sex drive, they wonder how long he can go without having sex with someone or some "thing".

When a former lady friend asked me one of these questions a couple years ago, I told her I was living like a 7-year-old again. It's amazing what an active imagination can do.

I couldn't imagine going the other route, I can't stand the smell of my own behind, let alone somebody else's.

Unfortunately, I can only speak for myself. I'd be amiss if I said that

there weren't a significant amount of men in prison who preferred the companionship of other men. That being said, I know that what goes on behind these walls is only a reflection of the larger reality on the other side.

The point is, homosexual behavior and homosexuals have been around for centuries and from the sound of their slogan, "We're Queer! We're Here! Get Used To It!" they're not going anywhere soon.

While I'll never condone such behavior for myself or my seed. I've never felt inclined to infringe on another individual's lifestyle either...until now that is. "Pretenders, switch hitters, slip-and-sliders, down-low brothers, homo-things," or whatever you want to call them, make it impossible to turn a blind eye.

It's one thing when a man wears his gender preference on his sleeve for everyone to see. He goes his way, rocks his 'rainbow' and its no secret where he stands. If a woman chooses to engage in a relationship with him, she knows exactly what she's getting in to.

On the other hand, when she runs across a pretender and everything isn't what it seems, the results have proven to be disastrous (HIV, AIDS).

It's not her fault when she's tricked by a fairytale prince who turns out to be just a fairy. The pretender is so good at what he does that he even fools himself. To him, having sex with men doesn't make him gay. In his warped thinking, only men who are penetrated can be classified as homosexuals.

For this confused individuals, let me offer some clarity. Regardless if you're pitching or catching, if you are a man and you have sex with another man, you are a "homosexual". It doesn't matter how many tattoos you have, how big your muscles are, or how well you can fight, if you enjoy sodomizing men, consider yourself the sixth member of the Village People.

Do us all a favor. Stop tricking your family. Stop tricking women and for your own sake, stop tricking yourself. Just come out of the closet.



Get More Love In Your Life

We all want more love. Between seeking it, courting it, and nurturing it, we spend the better part of a lifetime engaged in an all-out quest for affection. We yearn for partners who adore us, kids who worship us, and friends who celebrate us. Taught to see love as something that happens when we're good and deserving, we're utterly lost without it.

The search leaves us at the mercy of circumstance. If we're connected to the source of our longing we're "in" love. When the connection is broken, we're out. We don't think of love as existing on its own- but it does. Love transcends the people and things that pass through our lives as well as the ups and downs of relationships. It's an entity in itself, an enduring, unwavering presence.

When we choose to live-and love-unconditionally, embracing ourselves, other people, even the world at large, we find freedom. We feel at once more rooted and grounded, confident and buoyant, less vulnerable to stress, fear, anxiety, disappointment and jealousy. In a word, we become our best selves.

Love plays a far greater role than any single moment or person can contain. Rather, it's a force that piques our curiosity, tests our instincts, and surprises us -- even when we have known it all our lives.

Make love a practice. Love yourself first. Love always begins with generosity toward yourself. It has to. You can only give what you have. When you can engage in self-love, then you can give love and receive love unconditionally.

To Any Daddy

There are little eyes upon you,
 And they're watching night and day;
 There are little ears that quickly
 Take in every word you say.
 There are little hands all eager
 To do anything you do.
 And a little boy who's dreaming
 Of the day he'll be like you.
 You're the little fellow's idol;
 You're the wisest of the wise
 In his little mind about you
 No suspicion will ever rise.
 He believes in you devoutly.
 Holds that all you say and do
 He will say and do in your way
 When he's grown, a man like you.
 There's a wise-eyed little fellow
 Who believes you're always right,
 And his ears are always open,
 And he watches day and night.
 You are setting an example
 Every day, in all you do,
 For the little boy who's waiting
 To grow up to be like you.

Every Time I Close My Eyes

My AKA is Shawn Montgomery

I'm about to take you into my world.

As I sit behind these walls of steel, alone and feeling empty
 inside, the pain doesn't show, but the hurt still grows
 as another day is slowly fading away.

I close my eyes
 with rushing thoughts going through my head.
 Days and nights in this solitary square,
 my own prison hell.

Close your eyes and come with me,
 your image is the only key.

Follow your dreams and you may see
 Beyond the depths for reality,
 Where you must fight for pride and dignity.
 It's behind a number you must abide
 The strength for survival you'll find inside.

I know this world very well,
 it's my won private sort of hell,
 where others before once did dwell,
 in what's now my cell,

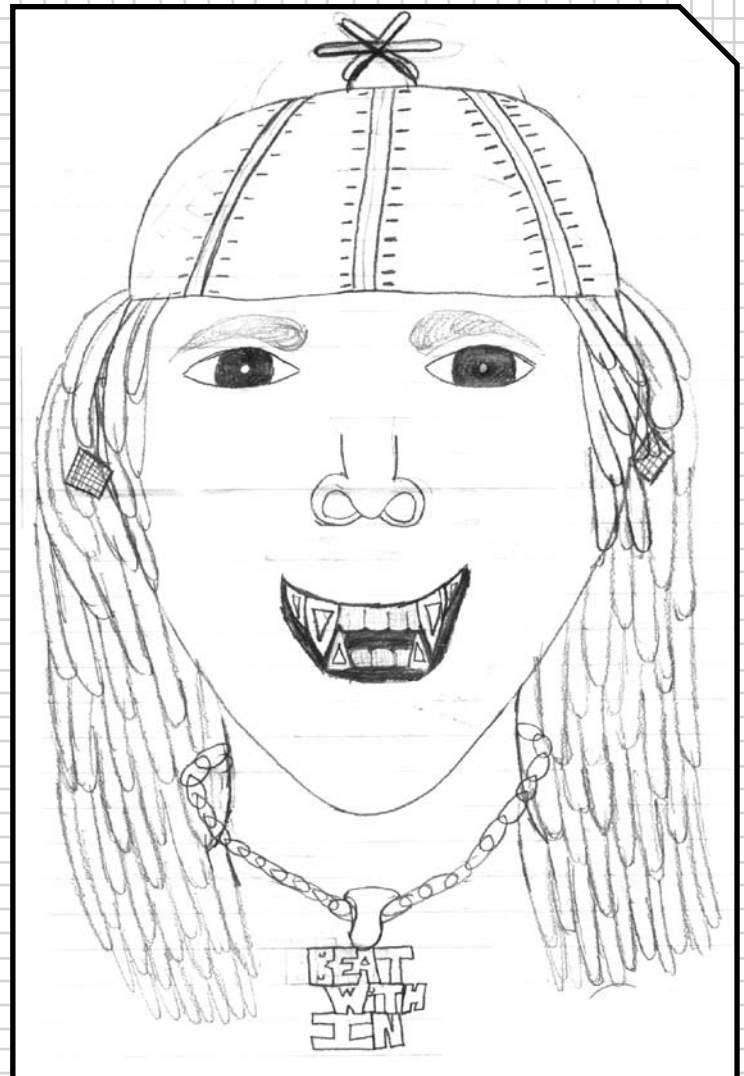
You fight for life,
 you battle to win, only to find out they've won once again.

There is a place you would rather be,
 far away from cement walls and bars,
 That place is just imaginary and it has no room
 for scars.

Wake up, for now its back to your world
 you must go,

This you should know,
 keep this one thought upon your mind
 You went home, I remain behind.

So if you should think of me from time to time
 Just pick up a pencil and drop The Beat Within a line.



World's Changin'

A new epidemic is plaguing the nation,
trigger happy youngins enraged with inflation,
enraged with the situation, enraged 'cause societies not
changing.
How can we support the government with our attributes?
There's kids in hoods who can't afford soup.
This isn't a white, black or Mexican thing,
Its not a race, more of a generation theme.
We got issues that need to be seen.
No place is safe even within rich security gates.
Stop the gang bangin', your way too late.
Intervention was lost when the new armored car
Was bought, how much did it cost?
Now they put prices in our toes,
Tags with serial number codes.
They enhance the street rage mode.
Their wondering how it came about,
Wielding their hierarchy clout, with their own ways out.
Not knowing the trap of the street,
It sucks you through 'till you claim defeat.
Let's kick another issue on this beat,
Does the judicial system need for me to repeat,
The violence they enhance and the destruction they
advance.
Is there something that needs to be remapped?
One of the last industrialized countries to do that,
Killin' inmates, but we all knew that.
How about this fact, giving juveniles life with no parole,
I thought we held a morality role.
One of four countries to do this,
Hope ya'll knew this.
Over 2000 youngsters without parole.
They can go as young as 10, what were we thinking then?
Not to mention, highest incarceration rates in the world,
That's our criminal retirement pension,
Has this caught any attention?!?
The worlds changing', aint it amazing',
Too many moms cryin', young folks dyin',
But the government keeps supplyin',
Destruction and their tired of our whining',
that's why we need to say "can you stop lyin",
Sure our support for them is declining',

We welcome back Tyler Guigni who writes us from the Solano County Jail in Fairfield, CA. We are grateful Tyler finds time to contribute his thoughts, his poetry. We must say, there is always room in our pages for thinkers and those who have knowledge to share.

No longer will they be denyin', our situation
We'll show them the facts and see how they react.
Oversea's intervention deserves our attention,
Forcing democratic societies on people who don't
Believe our invention.
Causing world tension, destructions relentless.
Tear down, build up, that's how the US rolls up.
Veto power on the UN committee,
If it effects us there, no way we're submitting.
Extradite the covert who destroyed your nation,
Please, but give us the one who bombed our train stations.
This is our public relations.
Jumping on Kosovo's mass demonstrations,
Joined up with the powerful UN conglomeration,
To bomb a rebelling Nation.
It's funny how we can support Kosovo,
But we can't apologize to the Nicaraguans
For the destruction we sow.
Supporting underground terrorists we all know.
These are a few, how many of you knew?
The worlds changing', ain't it amazing',
Too many moms cryin', young folks dyin',
But the governments keep supplin',
Destruction and they're tired of our whining'.
That's why we need to say "Can you stop lyin'?"
Show our support for them is declining', no longer
Will they be denyin', our situation. We'll show
Them the facts and see how they react.
Education is key, I'm sure if we were
Smarter the blocks would be a lot less hotter.
Our generation is not that bad,
Misguided perhaps following the fast.
Lets educate and learn the truth,
Not statistics subject to goons!
Too many of our moms been cryin',
Peoples homeboys is dyin',
Yet we're still willin' and smilin'.
So lets learn something new
Not let the strings of the government
Puppet master guide you.

To A Daughter I Never Had"

Lil' Leeno do you even remember
Who I am? Know I love you
And think about you again and again.
How you used to laugh in my
Arms and lay in my lap. You and
Your mommy were my world, if
You can even picture that. We used
To sleep together every night, 'til
Life broke us apart. It hurt real
Bad, but my life took a different path.
You momma had to leave, I left
Her with no choice. How could she
Stay when the police came
And took me away. I know you
Two are doing good and I'm ayte.
But I want you to know, you're the
Daughter I never had and I pray
For you every night.

In your heart you can overcome the street life

What is a Soldier

Does a soulja have to ride or die without any cares?
Does he have to hit the block mean muggin' wit a glock?
Why does he have to live the life of hard knock?
What happened to independent thought, or believing
In your heart you can overcome the street life
With your smarts, why is it cool to gangbang and slang?
How come you can only make a name on the
Streets through the game?
Why is the block so important that were willing
To squeeze the glock without a second thought?
How come we die for the government's property lot?
How come soulja's have to hold down the hood?
Why can't soulja's do something good?
It's cool to be a soulja, no doubt, but I
Gave enough for my boys, so I'm out.



Fairytale Dreams

Pain and fear, ever present on a block
 With straps cocked.
 Look left or right, another homeboy might possibly die
 tonight.
 Trigger finger itchin', soon the pistol we'll
 Be ditchin'.
 Never think things through.
 Let it pop and another body drops.
 Too many catching cases,
 Lost in the criminal justice oasis.
 Sad story of my generation,
 Another life sentence increase our frustration.
 There's two sides to my suburban nation.
 The American dream or the dirty street scene.
 Violence plagues the one's lost.
 Did you ever think how many lives it'd cost?
 Fist fights, gun fights, stabbings and crashings.
 You laugh and think this is a joke?
 Watch out 'cause the blood could cause you to choke.
 Pools appear when neighborhood beefs reappear.
 Urban street blocks brought to suburban park spots.
 Not to many people from my spot get locked up.
 Sad but true, one stop shop, the streets is locked.
 Gotta have game sown tight, too many of us lost, right?
 Is there something we missed?
 Did society teach us this?
 An untold story of a suburban youth,
 Spilled to you by a young white man who
 Grew up in this dream or is it all fairytale schemes?

The Folder

Why do we have such troubled youth?
 What more do we need then the national proof.
 Our life and our culture is being stuck in a folder.
 Lost in our misconstrued ways,
 The hype we believe has led us astray.
 We used to believe in academical standards,
 Now were more concerned with prison life matters.
 Concealed hatred unmasked by the way we behave,
 Repeat offenders not looking for better days-
 Why don't we change the way we maintain?
 Glorified stories emphasize the game mind frame.
 Statistically inclined, but not the way we had in mind.
 That's why I say our life is in a folder.
 Murders, robberies, gangs, we're getting' bolder.
 Charts are poppin', prisons are hoppin', crime is not
 STOPPIN'!
 Yet were worried about how much slump we're knockin',
 How much ice were rockin', how much cheese we stack
 and how many folks we tax.
 I know, from the streets is where I get my facts.
 We need to relax, re-evaluate times past.
 Our culture is being lost to the government
 Statistical culture,
 Now whose pockets are swoller?
 That's why I say we're being put in a folder!

Pain Of The Game

We've spent too many years in the game,
 Is it worth all the pain for the fame?
 Where is the glory and honor today,
 What we fought so hard to obtain?
 Now it's a 6 by 10 cell we try to maintain.
 This is for me, some cats aren't so lucky
 And get put under six feet.
 Slangin', bangin' and reppin' the block,
 This is how we used to live to claim we're hard knocks.
 What did that achieve us in the end?
 A life of broken dreams and forced to leave
 Those street glory scenes.
 Got taken out in a blaze of glory or those lights
 flashing warnings.
 This is how cats leave the game,
 This is where you earn your stripes of fame.
 The fame that lasts for what?
 It can't penetrate the coffin or cell block.
 It's gone in a blink of an eye, homeboy,
 I wish I was telling a lie.
 This is the fame that we tried to claim.
 The fame of the game that cost us our name.

*This is how we used to live to claim
 we're hard knocks.
 What did that achieve us in the end?
 A life of broken dreams
 and forced to leave
 Those street glory scenes.*

*I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning to the end.
He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke of the second with tears,
But he said that what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.
For the dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.*

read the rest of Herbert Schweigert's BWO piece on page 48

